

and you

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/44736556) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/44736556>.

Rating:

[Explicit](#)

Archive Warning:

[Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings](#)

Category:

[M/M](#)

Fandom:

[DCU, Batman - All Media Types](#)

Relationship:

[Dick Grayson/Jason Todd, Dick Grayson & Jason Todd, Minor or Background Relationship\(s\)](#)

Character:

[Dick Grayson, Jason Todd, Bruce Wayne, Clark Kent, Tim Drake, Alfred Pennyworth, Joker \(DCU\), Stephanie Brown, Kon-El | Conner Kent, Various Character\(s\), Damian Wayne](#)

Additional Tags:

[Angst, Fluff and Angst, Post-Break Up, Angst with a Happy Ending, Canon-Typical Violence, Attempt at Humor, Alternate Universe - No Powers, Alternate Universe - No Capes, Organized Crime Family Batfamily \(DCU\), how is that a tag guys, Bruce Wayne Does Not Adopt Jason Todd, Implied/Referenced Cheating, References to Lizzo's Music, Hijinks & Shenanigans, Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, I actually forgot to tag that, Non-Traditional Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, Consensual, Alpha Jason Todd, Omega Dick Grayson, Explicit Consent, Intersex Dick Grayson, Mates, Mating Bites, References to Drugs, technically, Recreational Drug Use, but not by the main characters, Slutty Dick Grayson, Bruce Wayne is a Good Parent, Hurt/Comfort, Serious Injuries, Kinda, Breaking Up & Making Up, Mating Cycles/In Heat, Vaginal Sex, Frottage, Oral Sex, Biting, Dirty Talk, Verbal Humiliation, but consensual and there's not a lot of it, Praise Kink, Implied Mpreg, like one sentence, Knotting, Nesting](#)

Language:

[English](#)

Stats:

Published: 2023-02-02 Completed: 2023-02-15 Words: 48,585

Chapters: 7/7

and you

by [victorianankles](#)

Summary

“Please,” Jason whispers, and Dick pulls down the hood once more to hide another round of unwanted tears. He's not sure who he's crying for; himself or the life that remains shattered between them.

Unable not to, he allows himself a glance, confused by the pain etched around Jason's mouth. If he didn't know any better, Dick would say that's misery turning green eyes dark.

But he does. Because reality is that Jason tossed them out the second he got too close to happiness, and Dick despises him for that. Because being mated meant so very little to him in the end. So, he can cry, he can regret. Jason can do whatever he wants, just not with Dick.

“Beg,” he hisses, turning away. “See where that gets you.”

or; Jason swept into Dick's life only to leave it shattered beyond repair when he left again--this is the story of what comes next

Notes

hello loves and welcome to another miserable soup of angst and fluff feat. some consensual ABO dynamics (which I fucking forgot to tag)

this entire fic is finished (I know it's incredible) so I'll probably post it throughout the next few weeks -- fair warning the chapters are fucking long because I have no self-control, so just a heads up!

also Dick and Jason aren't even close to being related

enjoy!!! <3

homeless

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

By all means, Dick should hate Jason Todd, the heartless bastard. Which he does, kind of, it's just that he's always been a bit of a masochist. Usually that's not a problem as much as it's a delight, but honestly, this is bordering on pathetic.

"Hurt," he says, voice flat. On the other end of the line Tim is quiet. "How bad?"

"Well," his brother begins in that tone which implies the oncoming arrival of a very uncomfortable answer, and for fuck's sake, Dick's head already hurts something fierce. There's no way anything coming out of Tim's mouth will be near good. "I wasn't there, but Dami says it was pretty bad. And, I –"

Then Tim fucking stops talking, which is just awful. He never leaves anything unsaid--never stops--unless the apocalypse is already here.

And so, like the pathetic, ridiculous masochist he *is*, Dick *aches* at the probability that Jason might just already be dead, body cooling in a morgue somewhere in dark Gotham. He doesn't know who he hates more. Himself or the fuckass who broke his heart.

"Tim." His voice doesn't waver. It doesn't. Exactly like his gut isn't turning in on itself in a mix of biological and—unfortunately—very much genuine despair.

"Yeah, uh, sorry, I just –"

I just don't know the nice way to tell you, that your mate, who decided to throw you out much like the weekly garbage and subsequently fuck his way through half of Gotham's eligible—and ineligible—omegas just to drive the point home, might actually be dying, if he's not already dead –

"He was shot somewhere in the chest. Scarecrow got the upper hand and one of his goons..." another pause, loaded and damning. "Word has it Damian couldn't determine the exact infliction of damage because, and I quote; his vision was blurry from the pleasure of seeing Todd bleed out in a dirty back-alley', and because of the. The uh... the

general amount of blood, you know.”

Once upon a time (and if you want to nitpick that one; four years and one huge, world-altering calamity ago) Dick wouldn't have hesitated. There would've been no questioning his return to Gotham because there simply hadn't existed a world in which Jason didn't wake up beside him.

Now though, that's the only world he knows.

His heart has plummeted to his gut at some point, silent and unbidden tears are burning a trail down his cheeks and Dick kinda feels like dying himself. He's not sure his omega hasn't clocked out already 'cause he's being unusually quiet for once.

“If he happens to die,” Dick whispers. “Text me.”

His phone breaks on impact with the wall not a second after he's hung up, and it's probably a good thing Bruce talked him into getting a penthouse after all, because Dick's scream of furious pain is left to echo out alone.

Dick used to dance.

Technically he still does, but solely for the sake of appearances. If Nightwing and Richard Grayson Wayne both up and left one day, people would ask questions that are better left unanswered. Batman's top enforcer is playing emissary in Metropolis under the guise of a shaky agreement with Superman, and Bruce Wayne's oldest son has shipped himself off to Opal City after yet another scandal in Gotham, relieving the title of heir to Timothy Drake Wayne.

The first part is kind of true, the second not at all, and the last bit is the only real part of Dick's life right now. No longer does the weight of Wayne Enterprises rest on his shoulders, something which he would've appreciated the freedom of five years earlier. Now, he's mostly sad.

And bored.

He wasn't when he still danced. Putting your body in the moves is one thing, but letting people see your entire soul with every twist and turn is another kind of high entirely. He doesn't dance anymore, he just *moves*. Makes a living of it still—not that he really needs it—after having signed with a troupe in Opal and appearing every now and then on celebrities' tours around the country.

Once it made him alive like only one other person has managed and the extraordinary, wild life of the flying free could do it. Nowadays the twists and turns feel mostly like a lament. Like the stiff repetitions of math, or the forceful cuts of a sculptor bending stone.

Metropolis isn't that far from Gotham which had been the compromise when Dick packed his bags and ran away. Mostly for Damian's sake, really. The kid cried when Dick broke the news, and then Bruce had looked at him; all large eyes and parental worry and asked if Clark's neighborhood could do, and Dick had finally agreed. That the stubborn bastard actually contacted Kent despite the history between them to ask for his help, for the sake of his *son*.

Well... there wasn't another choice, another city. And in the interest of being completely honest with himself, there probably isn't a place or country far enough away that it can mend Dick's broken heart.

He's not sure what the agreement between Bruce and Metropolis' ruling mobster is (or if there even is one) but Superman's only ever been cordial since Nightwing arrived. The care offered to Dick by *Clark Kent* is another story entirely, and not much of a surprise. Once he was Dick's third father after all, before Bruce fucked that one royally up.

He'd only been in Metropolis for a couple of days when Clark had swung by to say hi, despite his ridiculous schedule. Dick had been moaning around his quiet apartment—found by Bruce and paid for by Bruce and furnished by Bruce—when someone had knocked on the door. For a heart stopping, agonizing second (which hadn't been at all hopeful or pathetic as fuck) Dick had thought it was Jason.

He remembers shuffling closer, opening it with numb fingers and then the sour, unwanted disappointment throttling him when it revealed

Clark Kent instead of 200-and-something-pounds of green eyes, an asshole streak, and arms bigger and softer than the universe. Dick had felt a special kind of awful about that, because he'd genuinely missed Clark. A lot.

"Hey kid," he'd said, eyes warm and unbearably soft.

Dick had wanted to keep cool. Hard and sharp around the edges like Nightwing, but for once he hadn't been able to muster it.

His family in Gotham is his lingua franca, his Big Bang; his everything. But they're all alphas. Except Tim, of course. He's happily bonded to Connor though, and despite Bruce's perpetually broken heart, he hadn't been able to understand Dick's pain entirely.

The unmoving, steely omega pride clad in flannel and a kind smile had. Clark put a hand on his shoulder when the tears started falling, stance relaxed and unguarded even in front of an infamous enforcer. As if Dick was still allowed to crawl into his lap and be a little kid again.

"You're going to be okay," Clark had said, eyes filled with an unspoken hurt that fit the jagged edges of Dick's own like a bloody jigsaw.

He almost believed it.

Big hands. Jason has such big hands and they're fucking everywhere.

They lift Dick up by the waist like he weighs nothing; to situate him exactly like alpha wants it, where alpha wants it, and Dick is gone.

Whenever the calloused skin of handling guns for the bigger part of a life slides over his bare midriff on a night out, and Dick is in the mood where 'inhibitions' is just a word—one he doesn't even have to acknowledge—at that point of contact he'll fucking melt; go all omega pliant and sweet and Jason will rumble in cavern-deep satisfaction.

"All mine," Jason whispers, spreading his thighs so Dick can feel the stretch in his own and the silky dress rides dangerously high.

Dick leans in on a sigh, bites at Jason's lips and reciprocates; "my alpha. Mine, mine, mine."

He's sitting on the edge of the balcony when Bruce calls, one hand on the railing, the other in his lap. The wind pushes him around a little, so he sways to keep the balance. It's the most calming thing Dick knows these days. Sitting on the edge of life like this.

His therapist doesn't know about it.

"Hey B," he greets, trying to force some of his usual giddiness into it.

"You sound tired," comes the answer, so yeah, Dick failed epically, but you know what; Bruce is a crime lord pushing forty-five and still alive. He's *perceptive*, all right. Besides, Dick can't really be bothered.

It's been three days since Tim called, and Dick isn't sure he's slept at all since then, so at this point he's honestly *beyond* tired. Somewhere closer to the brink of death probably, but Bruce is a worrywart and a snitch, and Dick doesn't want an aggressive visit from Alfred and Damian.

"Yeah? That's weird. Work's tough right now, so I'm pretty much out cold the moment I'm over the doorstep."

Being a mafia-empire's top enforcer is always tricky work in a rival city, especially Clark's, so it's not exactly a lie, but Bruce's answering hum is dangerously knowing anyway. Maybe it's a dad-thing, being able to sniff out lies eight-hundred miles away. Maybe he's just really good at his job. Or both. No matter the reason, Bruce says a lot without saying shit at all and Dick lets go of the rail entirely to run a hand down his face.

"Please don't make me tell you the truth."

"Okay." The surrender is easy, like always. Then, "come home."

"Eh." Dick winces.

“I know this is far from preferable, but I’m in dire need of your help. To put it mildly. Metropolis or not you insist on being my enforcer, and at the moment your skills are required. In Gotham.”

So, Bruce is letting him lie a lot today. They both know there’s nothing Dick wants more than to come home and check up on his mate, and the only reason it hasn’t happened already is because he can’t make up a good enough excuse.

He frowns at the stars twinkling above him, trying to imagine that earthy alpha-scent of Bruce’s in a pathetic imitation of an anchor. “Why? Damian threatening to kill Tim again? I’m seventy percent sure it’s a joke, B.”

“No. That part I am capable of handling myself, believe it or not.” He sighs. “This is... Joker.”

“Ah,” Dick snorts. “What’s he doing now?”

“Fucking things up,” Bruce grumbles in a hilarious imitation of an exhausted parent to a very unruly toddler. Which isn’t that far from the truth, metaphorically speaking. Joker did start out as a Batman fan, although now he’s more of the ‘Insane Fanatic’ kind. “He’s gotten the grand idea of producing Kryptonite-bullets and is now selling it to whoever is interested. Which is everyone.”

Dick purses his lips.

This might be more than a thinly veiled excuse for him to slink back home and spy on Jason. Glancing to the right where Clinton Street shines bright in the darkness, he wonders if Bruce will ever pull his ass out of his head, and how long Clark will wait. Lately he’s been hanging around this cute reporter lady and from what Dick’s heard, Lois Lane doesn’t seem scared of emotional vulnerability.

“Does he know yet?” Dick asks without bothering to name names. The K-word is banned in Metropolis, with good reason, and Bruce has always been an overprotective idiot. Especially when it comes to his loved ones. Besides, the drug and Clark is a story as infamous as Batman and Superman’s legendary... ‘rivalry’.

“No. And he’s not going to.”

“Still,” Dick says, fond of the stubborn old fool right down to his

bones. “Damian is as good at handling Joker as I am. Why not let him take this one? I mean don’t send Duke, obviously, or I’ll have to punch you, but bottom-line is there are a lot of enforcers to choose from.”

He doesn’t know why he pushes. The excuse has finally appeared, handed to him on a silver-platter. Dick wouldn’t even have to thank Bruce, not when it’s under the pretense of Nightwing doing his damned job, yet here he is, biting his cheek to the point of blood, heart breaking and breaking and breaking.

Maybe that’s just what love is; the continuous, conscious sacrifice of your own sanity.

“Want me to answer that?” Bruce’s voice is soft, quiet like the night. It catches at that place in Dick his parent’s carved out and filled until they couldn’t anymore, until Bruce came and picked him up from a dirty circus floor and told him there was still a home for him in the world. Still a parent left.

“Nope,” Dick mutters, slipping off the railing and back inside to pack his stupid bags. “No, I don’t. Bruce?”

“Hm?”

The question burns. It needs to get out or Dick will absolutely fucking die. “Why can’t I just.” He sighs, pushing the heels of his palms into his eyes. “Why don’t I hate him?”

(He does. But only because he loves him more)

“He made you alive,” Bruce eventually says, after a long silence, the only other person in the world who knows the answer to Dick’s pain although from the other end of the field. Clinton street shimmers on behind his windows, and somewhere in Gotham’s endless dark the asshole who rendered Dick’s heart to dust under his boot is bleeding.

“Fuck that shit.”

Bruce huffs a laugh in agreement.

It's plastered all over the front page of Gotham's seediest gossip magazine, but that's only for a day.

Then—from one moment to the next—Jason Todd's name along with at least five omega models' find their way to every magazine and newspaper available in Gotham.

'Breaking news! Our one and only alpha-bad-boy-heartthrob confirms; sizzling night with beautiful omegas'

'Who would've thought he could get any hotter? Latest in; Jason's a freak!'

'Three of five omegas in orgy of the century confirms; Mister Todd's got a big dick'

Tears etch into Dick's skin, clogs his nostrils and blurs his vision, but the headings stay disastrously clear, and he breathes right through them. He breathes through the confirmation arriving by text later as well. And when he goes to Jason's in a masochistic fit he hopes will shut his brain off, he remains fucking breathing. Life's tasted a lot like sticking your tongue out the window ever since.

Half a day later and Gotham's petulant, rainy grey envelops him. It's replaced by Bruce the second Dick steps into the manor. It's been too long since they last saw each other, and although Bruce's omega is still hundreds of miles away and sad because of him, he's got Tim, so he doesn't lack the comfort of the other gender as much.

Dick doesn't say anything, he just burrows closer to his dad, face hidden in a strong neck.

"It's okay," Bruce promises him quietly, words a hilarious echo of the one he's pushed away.

Damian doesn't hug him, but it's close. Instead, a hand catches a hold of Dick's ragged band-tee and tugs until they're close enough to scent without actually touching. It hurts a bit to realize his baby brother has grown tall enough that his forehead bumps Dick's chest now, and shame at his own cowardice momentarily flares up. Then Tim comes

stumbling out from one of the upper rooms, followed closely by a smug Conner Kent, and Dick gets even more hugs and squeezes and scents and he is...

Well, Dick's home.

Here in the endless drizzle and beneath overcast skies, holed in by old manor walls. With Alfred, who eventually appears too, eyes going suspiciously misty which means Dick starts sobbing and Damian runs away. It's Bruce's earth and the airy morning fog of Tim, woven tightly with his alpha's oranges. Minty Dami and beta Alfred.

But it's also the hollow lack of whiskey and smoke in the hallways, and the way Dick's stormy scent seems to lack some of its thunder.

"Why?" Dick whispers before he can stop himself. He doesn't actually want the answer. Pretty sure it'll kill him once it comes.

There's no mercy at the feet of Jason though, who simply turns his face, jaw working.

"Come on Dickie," he huffs, leaning against the doorframe to the apartment Dick's being kept out of. "I mean it was fun, sure. You're a great time, beautiful and funny and amazing, but this –" Jason waves a lazy hand, gesturing between them. Clearly, he can't hear the continuous cracks of Dick's soul falling apart. "It's too much work. Too many secrets to keep, and –"

"I'm not worth those?" Dick's voice is a vortex of numbness, no infliction whatsoever. Jason's eyes twitch but he doesn't say anything—doesn't look—so Dick continues for him. "Not even worth the secrets."

"Like I said –"

"But that's not what I asked," Dick cuts him off, again.

Now Jason does look at him, face carefully blank. Dick stares back, cold to the bones.

"Why did you have to fuck them, alpha? I mean..." he chokes on a laugh

that isn't happy at all, "shit, you think I'd beg for something different if you left this as a simple breakup? Do you honestly believe I have so little respect for myself, that even when you stick your tail between your legs and flee, I would still want to be with you?"

He's officially crying now which honestly just makes everything that much worse, but he can't stop. Jason frowns, opening his mouth to say something catastrophically dumb no doubt, but fuck that.

"Don't lie to me," Dick warns, dangerously soft. If he didn't feel so much like drowning and burning at the same time, he would have basked in the way Jason snaps his trap shut. "You haven't grown tired of me, Jason Todd. You're afraid. Of what we could be."

It's so quiet now. Probably because Jason isn't breathing. There's something terrible in his eyes, something awful and ugly that makes him look away from Dick again.

"Okay," Dick says, nodding. He's leaking like a sieve, entirely soundless; there's no noise capable of relaying the ruin Jason has put upon him. Staring back at his alpha, his mate—who doesn't have the courage to keep holding his hand because he's afraid of love, so much that he's resorted to lying about it—Dick takes three tumbling steps forward, falling into him. That, at least, pushes a tiny and discontented sound out of Jason. Strong hands wrap around Dick's biceps, but Dick shoves them off.

"Dickie –"

"Shut up," he hisses, and thumps a weak fist against Jason's chest. If nothing else then at least this – "Shut up, shut up, shut up!" – at least give him the last word.

Pheromones flow from him in a tsunami meant to drown them both, and it has the desired effect.

"Omega –"

Jason's eyes are blacker than the void, distressed alpha scent succumbing to Dick like grass in the wind. He reaches for Dick again, but Dick catches his wrist and pushes him away, breathing through his mouth to make sure he doesn't get a single whiff of another omega clinging to Jason's skin. He'll have most of them washed off by now, but if Dick gets close enough the crime will be palpable, he knows.

“Alpha,” he whispers, chest heaving in heavy sobs that has the fortunate effect of pulling a miserable whimper out of Jason.

“No, don—don’t do that. Please, omega —“ He gasps, another attempt at touching brutally caught off.

It’s petty, simple and insignificant revenge; once Dick and his pheromones are gone, Jason will be able to gather himself, push away any and all thoughts and memories like Dick will never be able to. Because this isn’t his choice.

So, he feels no remorse when Jason’s knees buckle, biology sending him to the floor.

Big, dark eyes no longer green plead for Dick to stop but, instead of listening, Dick grabs Jason by the chin, crying and crying and crying and says, “I hope you remember this. Me. All we had. And I hope it hurts when you realize it’ll never be yours again.”

Dick doesn’t recall anything after that, except for the alpha he leaves on the floor and the pleas for an omega he couldn’t be brave enough to fight himself for.

“That piece of fucking —“ Dick cuts himself off, but only so he can continue to hiss profanities under his breath. The comm line is open and little pots have big ears.

“I know what curse words are, Nightwing,” Damian drawls, static making his voice crackle. Then, as if to prove it, “want me to murder the fuckass? For real this time?”

Bless the little demon and his ceaseless threats but Dick might actually consider it for a hot second before he decides—no. Despite the appalling relief he would rather not be feeling at the sight of dark hair and a white streak sauntering around on two very much alive legs, he doesn’t want the bastard dead.

*Still. He thinks Jason could—at the very *least*—look a little more hurt. Not grinning that stupid big smile of his, the roguish one that’s a tad wicked. The one that always made Dick’s blood boil. He is though. Grinning and lounging in his dumb night club, looking*

all hot at the bar as he chats with the bartender, like he isn't supposed to have a hole in his chest and...

Unbothered. Jason looks entirely unbothered. There are no dark circles under his eyes, like the ones Dick has fought to eradicate for almost five years, or any sign that the smile may be forced despite a limp, battered heart. The walls of the Red Hood's favored club vibrate with a heavy bass against Dick's back, but it's far from enough to get him going again. He's slumping in an imitation of tipsy oblivion to refrain from drawing attention, though it's getting increasingly harder not to fall into the offensive.

For at least two years it's been easier. Not good. It'll probably never get to that again, but better than before. He hasn't felt pathetic or dirty or unwanted for so long. Even the anger started to subside a little, allowing Dick the mundane enjoyment of going to cafés with Babs and Tim without feeling the least bit shitty.

His point is, he knew himself again. And all it takes to make that crumble is a single, unaffected smile, guarded by a dimple he knows the exact depth off but can't fucking touch.

"Wing?" Tim's voice is hesitant, and Dick silently curses himself for spacing out. His brother sounds so abashed. "I'm sorry, we all thought he was done for this time, if I knew..."

Physically shaking himself out of his frozen stupor, Dick huffs and clenches his fists against the roaring hurt licking his gut. "Nope. No apologies Red. Thank you for telling me. Just means I'll be able to kill him myself."

The lie is big and fat on its way out and nobody believes him, not even himself, but Tim says, "of course," like he means it and a beat later the line goes quiet. They're just a click away, but the impression of being left alone is enough.

The strobe light writhes its mad dance, catching Jason's eyes every now and then. It highlights scars and a harsh face capable of the greatest softness, completely untouched by what it does to Dick seeing Jason illuminated like that.

It's forever you know, he'd warned Dick when they hovered in front of each other an eon ago, lips about to meet for the first time. *You're it, Dickie. If you leave, I die.*

“Don’t look dead to me, Jay,” Dick whispers, trying and failing to kill that fucking relief when it surges again, his omega torn between joy and devastating fury. He’s angry. So, so angry and yet his feet are begging him to run over there. To go home.

Alpha. Mate. Love. He’s okay.

Except that Jason isn’t home anymore. If he ever was.

Something shimmers in Dick’s peripheral view, so he lifts his head and opens his arms and only a moment later an omega woman presses against his side. Blonde hair and a shimmery dress momentarily block Jason from his sight—another kind lie lend by Bruce. Placing an informational extraction point in another boss’ territory is ballsy, even if they’re somewhat partners in crime.

(A partnership that holds as long as Damian isn’t allowed more than ten feet close to Jason)

“Nightwing?” The woman coos, scratching filed nails down his cheek. She smells like morning bakery and scotch, and Dick’s hands fall to her hips, smoothly pushing her over to keep an eye on Jason.

Dick is in uniform; dark and tight, the combat jacket’s hood up but the mask covering the lower part of his face should be identifying this close. “Yes,” he says anyway, softening his gaze to something warm and a little flirty. Years of surviving doesn’t bend the knee for a broken heart. “You’re my bird?”

“I am, actually,” a laugh accompanied by huge, hazel eyes blinking at him in an impressive show of drunken innocence, “tomorrow, eight o’clock at the docks. The goods will be there too.”

Dick raises a brow, sliding a glance back towards Jason, just to make sure –

Only decades of practice make sure the informant doesn’t notice the flinch he’s unable to stop when he realizes he’s lost Jason. Gone from the bar, his seat has been taken by some other alpha—this one drunk off his ass, and from the looks of it about to get kicked out. Jason never liked the wasted ones.

Humming Dick pushes the woman forward a bit, turning in a show of

getting cozier with her. His eyes wander the perimeter of the club, raising to the higher, open levels of the second floor when he finds no sign of Jason on the ground. “Impressive,” he says, heart beating its way out of his chest. “Where’s my proof?”

“I’m good at my job,” she laughs, pressing something into his hand. He quickly pockets the chip, brushing fingers down her side to hide the movement as anything but drunken groping.

Where is he?

“You certainly are,” not to the left, not right either, *where*— “the boss says thanks.”

There. Leaning against the railing of the secluded VIP area on the second floor, big body flashing in and out of sight in the strobe lights.

Looking right at them.

“Shit,” Dick says softly, shaking his head when the woman in his arms hums inquiringly.

Technically Jason shouldn’t be able to tell it’s him. It’s no secret that Richard Grayson Wayne fucks around in Opal City, doing God knows what. That Nightwing is currently playing emissary in Metropolis isn’t one either and if that wasn’t enough, Jason made pretty damn sure Dick would have no desire to show up anywhere close to his playgrounds again. He’s wearing scent blockers too, manufactured by Tim, which means that not even a half-hearted mate should be able to pick up on any familiar aromas. There are literally no logical explanations as to why Dick would be here—so why does it feel like Jason knows?

Dick can’t see his eyes or expression from this far away, yet he’s completely caught, heart lodged somewhere in his throat as fear and rage battle for passage.

“You got the money, or will I have to make you one nut sore?” The nails against his skin suddenly turn biting, roughly pulling him back to the present.

Dick forces a laugh, gently catching a hold of the woman’s wrist in one hand, swallowing down a jumbo-sized lump in his throat. He needs to get out of here. “Careful, sweetheart. You’re gonna bruise the

goods.”

“Mh, yes. I suppose those eyes are very pretty...” she concedes, voice turning sugary in the blink of an eye. “Ever find me off the clock, I’ll be happy to make some time for you.”

Slipping a wad of hundreds out of a hidden pocket, Dick’s hands wander to the hem of her dress, easing up and under to pin the money in the knife-holster hidden by shimmery folds.

“Really? Lucky me.” Eyes still trained on Jason—who hasn’t moved an inch—Dick rights himself. “Now, since you’ve been such a great help, I should probably reciprocate the favor and advice you to get those gorgeous legs of yours out of here as fast as possible.”

She tilts her head. “Bout to get in trouble Nightwing?”

“Always.” Raising a hand to tap the comm back into action Dick shoos her off with a wink.

His brain is telling him things. Petty things. Things that probably shouldn’t be executed.

“Red,” he says anyway, eyeing the unmoving mountain of Jason Todd who is definitely staring at him.

Seriously. Dick should just let it be.

“Could you kill the lights, please?”

Tim is there immediately. “He noticed you?”

“Don’t know if he’s aware of who he’s looking at, but you know. Better safe than sorry. Uh, also,” Dick continues quickly before he can stop himself, biting his lip against the vindictive claw of wounded resentment. “You know that song we really like?”

“Which one?” Tim asks dryly, but the little shit isn’t fooling anyone, Dick can hear the rapid tapping of a keyboard. His guess is Jason’s speakers are already in the gremlin’s hands, and honestly, Dick can’t turn back now, can he?

One for the resentment, zero for Dick’s dubious morality.

An involuntary snarl pulls at his lips, and he drops the act of pissed, righting himself so he can tilt his face fully towards Jason. The tightening of his body is covert, but Dick knows the signs of discomfort in his alpha better than himself, even across a dark nightclub and the years of pain and anger hovering between them.

“I’m thinking Lizzo,” Dick hums, sauntering backwards and keeping Jason in his line of sight as he pushes from his relaxed pretense against the rail. The blood in Dick’s veins boils, heartrate accelerating. “And all the hurtful truths out there. On loop preferably, and *very* hard to get rid of.”

Tim cackles. “Right away, sir.”

In the VIP lounge Jason tilts his head in contemplation, hands twisting at his sides. Once upon a time Dick’s dick (ha) would’ve loved the sight of that. But that was then, and this is now, and he’s definitely not getting hard from pissing Jason Todd off.

Okay. Maybe a bit. Dubious morality, remember.

“Here wo go,” Tim singsongs. “In three, two, one and –“

Just before the light goes out, leaving the club in utter blackness and Lizzo starts preaching at an ear-bleeding volume, Dick raises two fingers to his temple, tapping them shortly before lifting them in mock-salute.

He thinks Jason may have vaulted over the railing and onto the floor but Dick is already slipping past frantic security and out into the night.

“... *turns out I’m a hundred-percent that bitch –“*

Before they become anything else, they’re best friends.

There’s a million different reasons for this, tiny and universal, but most of all Jason makes him laugh until his belly hurts and he’s heaving for breath.

He also makes venting easy, so much that Dick doesn’t feel the least bit

shitty screaming about Bruce or his siblings, because with Jason, anger isn't just a weapon; it's cathartic. It lightens his bones in a way nothing has since he floated the air with his parents—It almost puts him on the perilous edge of a trapeze again. There are game nights with casually deep conversation in-between the pauses of quiet Dick for once doesn't need to fill. Jason cooks for him, lets him perch on a stool and gossip and babble without lifting a finger.

He holds Dick when he cries, and although Jason won't shed a tear (he can't do it by his own management anymore, Dick thinks, not when they've been forced from him for so long) Dick gets to hold him during his difficult times too.

"You like this type of movie, right?" Jason asks, wafting two tickets and a proud grin. "I'm free tonight."

"And what if I'm not?" Dick teases, just because he wants to find the edges of that smile. It doesn't seem to have any, like there's no finite end to it, but that's too good to be true.

"Then we're saving 'em for another time. Can't seize Mr. Grayson Wayne every night, I guess."

"Oh my, does that mean you would if you could? My nights are expensive."

"I bet. Probably better for my poor ears to get a reprieve anyway," Jason sniffs, and Dick has to hit him for that.

He grabs the tickets. "Meet me in Blud at seven. If you're late there'll be no breadsticks to fight over."

The boarder of the smile only grows larger, stretching somewhere beyond the physical realm, and as the thing between them shifts, the foundation remains intact. Jason Todd is Dick's greatest love and best friend.

You mate and it sticks, which is a huge, cosmic fucking prank Dick has half a mind to put down the proverbial meatgrinder and subsequently toss into a dumpster on fire. Apparently, you'll get rid of the adhesive shit if you can muster enough antagonistic feelings that they hit the

‘hate’ mark, which isn’t something Dick’s interested in analyzing too deep.

Considering he’s still—very much—mated to Jason Todd.

Alfred doesn’t much like the stunt Tim and Dick pulled last night, as it turns out. This being made very clear in the silent—yet incredibly judging—lack of a croissant on their plates the next morning. There’s actual sorrow in his brother’s eyes as he gazes at the empty dish in front of him.

“I mean we did it. But at what cost?” Then he turns to Conner. “Con, babe. My one and only. Can I have a piece of your delicious French pastry, please?”

“You brought this upon yourself, Tim. I’m not putting my right for croissants on the line here.” There’s a hilarious finality to Conner’s words, but Dick sees the exchange of pastry under the table not a second later. Judging by the amused twinkle in his eyes Alfred does too.

Dick turns hopeful eyes to Bruce.

“Here,” his father says, throwing him his own croissant. He even accepts the smack to the back of his head from Alfred with a smile and twinkling eyes. “Good job.”

After breakfast Dick shuts himself off in the Batcave, head buried in what Bruce and Damian has managed to pin down on Joker’s recent stunt with the K-bullets. He does have a job to do, and maybe pouring himself into the case will eradicate the sight of Jason spotting him from his mind.

Thing is Joker never does something like this without a billion reasons behind it. Ludicrous, ridiculous reasons perhaps, but no less dangerous for it and honestly, his drive could be anything from trying to throttle Bruce again or simply for the shits and giggles of it all. Dick’s not going in without knowing, is all he’s saying. Last time he did that, he came out beaten to the brink of death and wearing a frilly birthday hat.

At some point Tim shuffles in, tinkering with stuff and answering emails for Wayne Enterprises with an adorable, old-man frown on his face. The little nerd is already a mini-Bruce-Wayne. Minus the dallying and slutting around of course. If Dick and Tim teamed up, they could Voltron into a Bruce and, hey, there's a thought.

"No, but Timmie, listen. We could take over the world. Imagine, two Bruce Waynes."

"I'm not interested in starting the apocalypse, thanks Dick. Also, if you must compare me with someone, please let it be Lucius Fox."

Dick snorts. "Don't let the old man hear you say that."

"Ah." Tim waves a careless hand, eyes glued to the screen. "He knows. And he's happy about it. Besides, dad's uh... slutzona? Is tame compared to your whole show."

"Yeah, because I'm actually serious about the art, Bruce uses it as a cover." Dick shakes his head in disappointment and neither of them mention it's been a *while* since he last indulged in anything remotely slutty. "He would have been great."

Instead of answering Tim gags and pops on some Lizzo and Dick goes back to his Joker-research.

In the end eight PM rolls around faster than anticipated, so he doesn't find out much except that Joker's made a deal with some nameless drug lord who produces the Kryptonite for him, before he himself pours the shit into custom-made bullets. Whoever the drug lord is they're probably working *with* Joker, or at least gaining profit from the sale, but Dick's just gonna assume this is a two-man thing. Or, more precisely, a co-op between two families which means more money and more fists to his face.

He grabs his mask on the way out and two Eskrima sticks in addition to the gun tucked into a holster on his thigh. Better safe than sorry, though Dick's never been one for killing.

"Heading out," he calls over his shoulder to Tim, who simply grunts in reply before disappearing into his emails again.

Fortune favoring the brave is a fucking lie Dick realizes, as he swings down with the trapeze, then up to where he's supposed to jump only to miss it and goes down again.

He loses his grip, for no reason at all except the sudden image of his parents crushed against a circus floor. The fall wrestles a terrified cry from him even though he knows the safety net will hold, knows it's there.

There's blood on his hands, the quiet and cold chest of his father against his ear.

"Fuck –" he wheezes, the impact with the net bouncing him upwards again. His breath rushes out in hard staccatos, throat tightening under invisible hands. When Dick opens his eyes there are spots dancing around the room. He thinks he might smell blood.

Then whiskey smoke hits him and strong hands grab his shoulders, carefully hauling him out of the net.

"It's okay baby," Jason's voice is low, deep and all-encompassing, but Dick is still falling, still drowning in centuries of old, sawdust-thick blood. Arms wrap around him, situating him in a lap that feels only vaguely familiar. "You're okay."

"Not –" Dick chokes. "Not okay. Dying. Gonna –"

"You're not, promise, would never allow it."

Dick loses a sob, searching blindly for the spot where his alpha's scent is the strongest. Jason quickly understands what he's trying to reach, and grabs Dick by the neck, guiding him to the juncture of his throat where the scent glands sit.

"They're cold," Dick whines and Jason rocks him. "Mom and dad."

"Not anymore, Bluebird. They're nice and warm now. They're okay." A broad palm sweeps up and down Dick's spine under his shirt, each run of skin against skin dragging him closer to the present.

Dick burrows in because he's cold too. "You think so?"

"Know so," Jason says softly, but with a conviction sturdier than the

mountains. “Wanna hear what else I know?”

Sounds and feeling are the first senses to return, and Dick carefully tries opening his eyes. All he can see is the ground and Jason’s strong back, so he focuses on the rise and fall of the muscles underneath the thin tee he’s wearing.

“Hm?”

“They’re proud of you.”

Dick shakes his head. “I panicked, fell. Messed up, Jay.”

“I get that’s how it feels to you, and that’s okay, but I didn’t see any messes. Baby, you took a fucking swing. A month ago, you couldn’t get up the ladder.”

“M not supposed to fall –“

Jason’s hand finds rest at his nape again, squeezing gently but with enough force to quiet him. “Dick,” he says, seriously. “We’re supposed to fall, ain’t that what you always say? Else we won’t learn how to get up?”

Dick shivers, slipping his arms around Jason’s waist and squeezes tight.

It’s true, he does say that, but being wise and optimistic is a lot easier in theory than it is after falling twenty feet and reliving the worst trauma of your life. Maybe he shouldn’t have tried this so soon. There are other levels, closer to the ground and less daunting, that would’ve been much more appropriate for him to start out with again.

Pride had gotten him up the ladder, though. Pride, hope, and Jason. Because his alpha had looked at him one evening last week and quietly promised to come along if Dick ever wanted to fly again. Because Jason takes his hand and suddenly everything feels possible. When they kiss, when they love, when they simply look at each other, it feels like Dick is up in the air again, sailing through one gap and the next.

He’d wanted to show Jason he could do it, and himself. But he fell.

‘So, what?’ the kid inside of him whispers, haughty and unafraid of death because not flying is the same as not living. ‘Get back up.’

“It looked amazing,” Jason whispers into his skin. “You looked amazing,

and I'm not afraid to admit I kind of have a boner."

Unable to help himself Dick snorts, and he probably smears Jason's shoulder with even more snot but that's okay he thinks. "Did I give you a hard Dick?"

Deflating a little, Jason sighs. "You're not even trying."

"Just didn't wanna come off too cocky." His smile is wavery, but it's there and growing stronger in tandem with his alpha's fond exasperation.

"Shaddup."

Gotham in the details is nothing short of astonishing. One wouldn't think so, perched on a container by the dark, stinking docks, uniform soaked through several minutes ago and waiting for a fucking clown to roll his gag-show.

Again.

But it is. And Dick has always appreciated beauty.

Octobers here are colder than anywhere else except maybe the north-pole, and the moon rarely makes an appearance at all, but she's somewhere behind the heavy layer of clouds, peeping out every now and then in between bouts of rain. It is glimpses like that which defines the place—framed by gargoyles, harbors, secrets, and truths. Gotham is beautiful because it's peculiar and a little wrong. Because it's home.

Bruce's empire stretches across most of the city although he, through recent years, has limited himself a bit. It would be a mistake to think that decision was based upon a sense of humility—Dick's pretty sure Bruce doesn't even know that word. The downsizing mainly happened because he doesn't actually need the space. While most of the Gotham gangs operate on greed or bitter hatred to the world, The Batman's code of conduct is somewhat... different.

Different and intricate.

He doesn't deal in weapons or drugs except the ones that keep the hardcore shit off the streets. Instead of beating up good, law-abiding citizens, he smites other criminals, even going so far as to eradicate entire syndicates should they pose a larger problem. But he's toned down. Ever since Tim agreed to be the next heir and Dick publicly abdicated so he could live the life of freedom he wants to, Bruce has been focusing most of his time on the legitimate Wayne Empire.

Also, Damian. The kid's good. He doesn't need to inherit a family legacy of blood and pain, even if it's been done in the name of keeping the good clean.

Speaking of...

"You would damn yourself for the entire world, wouldn't you?" Dick had whispered once upon a time, in the dead of night.

The answer had arrived accompanied by a wicked smile and the rough caress of calloused fingertips down his spine. *"Obviously."*

Jason's a lot like Bruce when it comes down to it; ruthless, but with an immortal hunger for kindness. There's no Kryptonite to be found in his streets, no kids taken in the night if he can help it. Jason would lay down his life for an innocent, no questions asked, as long as they're good. Once, Dick took that as a sign, thought Jason to be the most caring, selfless idiot to ever live. But saving strangers and braving the terrible ordeal of being loved and love in return aren't the same thing. Now Dick doesn't know what to call Jason anymore.

Memories are friends and foes alike, nightmares and dreams and the constant reminder of what he once had.

He huffs the thoughts of Jason away, idly swinging the leg he's thrown over the edge of the container and scans the empty docks beneath him.

Joker should be here any minute now, it's five to eight and he's never late. Tonight definitely won't be the exception to that rule either, not when he's got his hands on something as dangerous as Kryptonite. Should Clark find out it's going around again... Maybe Bruce is actually protecting *Joker* by putting Nightwing on the job. The two have always had a weird relationship, fueled by Joker's obsession of the Batman and Bruce's bleeding heart for the sick. A dangerous cocktail, but it has its funny moments.

Two minutes to eight and the sound of a motor reaches Dick's ears. With a twist he flips up and further down the container, slipping into the darker parts of the shadows mere moments before three vans skids into sight.

"Oh wow," Dick mutters under his breath, watching with raised brows as the doors open and goons start piling out, "you certainly haven't spared any expenses this time, Jokes."

The moon disappears behind a cloud again, swallowing the harbor with heavy shadows, so Dick fishes out the binoculars with night vision. Tim never disappoints, the moment he's got them up, his vision's back and he settles onto his stomach to wait.

Joker's pretty much surrounded by clown-masked lackeys, cackling at something one of them said. Dick frowns. He's too far away to make out any words, which means he's gonna have to relocate. Some nimble rolling and a little crawling get him three containers closer, and although this one's a little less dark than the other, Joker's words are clear.

" – and *bang!* Bappity-bop a head flopped! How wonderful, this itty-bitty bullet, capable of drawing such tragedy." He raises a hand, something small and silver pinched between pointer finger and thumb. Dick snaps a couple of photos via the binoculars (and Tim's genius)

They'll send the pictures immediately, so they should be available for analysis at the cave already if someone's still around. Which Tim will be, unless Conner's managed to seduce him into an early bed, of course. That occasionally does happen.

Joker flips the bullet into the air, catching it with a flourish hand. "This will do it, this time it *will*." Sighing dreamily, he presses the tiny piece of metal against red-smeared lips. "Together love, we will kill Batsy! Blast his fucking head *right off*."

Ah, yes. Wonderful. It's back to the murder schemes. Dick rolls his eyes. If he had a dollar for every time he's heard Joker make that exact promise (and for every time he's failed to deliver) he'd be almost as rich as Bruce. Still, as per usual, the assassination attempt has spread and is now including an unknown quantity of innocent people, so Dick'll have to take the operation down.

“The boss will be happy to hear that,” someone says, and Dick moves his eyes towards the source.

“Better be,” Joker grumbles, suddenly terribly inconvenienced judging by the tremble of his lower lip. “He *punched* me.”

He's talking to another goon, although this one's mask-less and clad in all black. Military, from the looks of it. The poor idiot is tense as fuck, stands too far away and won't look at Joker for too long at a time.

“I. Um, yes. Mr. Joker. He is... He's got some anger issues –“

“Ya' *think*?” Joker screeches—another man with anger issues—and throws his hands into the air. “If he wasn't so good at what he does I'd put a bullet up his asshole.”

Dick sighs, glancing towards the abandoned vans. This is derailing. The only goal for tonight is to snatch a K-bullet or two, so Tim and Babs can work their magic. Beating up Joker is scheduled for later. Using the dramatics below as a cover Dick might just be able to sneak a sample without being spotted, though.

“– lips split for a week! My pretty, pretty lips, all messed up and do I get an apology? *No!* Just because I said –“

“Boss, I think we should get on with the transaction –“

“Don't interrupt *my rant* –“ Gunshot, and then the wet gurgling of a dying man. “As I was saying...”

Alright, that's it.

Dick pushes to his legs, slipping down the backside of the container and sprints to another a few feet away. From here he rolls under a broken fence so he can crawl onto yet another container, dropping down directly behind the vans. Thank God for idiots who keep their secret meetings in hide-and-seek paradise.

“You know, it's not like this was *my* idea,” Joker hisses, voice eerily close as Dick sidles up to the van Joker himself got out of. “Just thought it would be fun to kill Batsy, but *noo*, world-domination or nothing I suppose.”

Dick freezes, one hand through a window and just about to swipe a couple of bullets.

World-*what* now?

“Don’t know if this plan’s gonna work, but if I do get my happy little bum on Gotham’s criminal throne, your boss can have whatever fucking city he wants, as long as he stays the fuck away from me. Whatever someone wants with Metropolis’ shiny asshole I ain’t got a clue, though.”

Joker makes a gagging noise, clearly finding the entire thing absolutely hilarious, but Dick’s got this nagging feeling it’s bigger than a joke this time. He slips two bullets and slinks away into the night.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Conner manages to sound both exasperated and furious with a single huff of air. “The asshat’s insane.”

“Duh,” says Tim. “I mean. He’s wearing purple. Who the fuck wears purple?”

“Steph,” Dick laughs.

Somewhere in the background Bruce hums a happy little tune. Whenever Joker threatens to take his life, he always gets into a certain kind of mood. “Huntress.”

“Starfire. And Catwoman, once upon a time,” Damian chimes in. “I’ll be happy to relay your sentiment to all of these ladies, Timothy.”

“Alpha, kill the little demon,” Tim hisses, followed by a bump and then Bruce stops singing.

Dick snorts, throwing a look around. He’s taking the dingier alleys home—or well, the least *frequented* to be precise. Almost all alleys in Gotham are dingy, so you can’t divide them by that factor alone. You simply don’t discuss secret intel in this city without making absolutely sure you’re alone. And even then you keep your voice down and

words short.

“Guys. Please focus. One thing is the death threats, nothing new there. Actually, it’s been a while since the last one, it’s almost nice.” Bruce hums his agreement. “Another entirely is the W-word. We don’t know what they’re planning.”

“Joker says a lot of shit and exaggerates even more,” Tim reminds him. “Maybe he’s simply being dramatic.”

“Please. He always is, even when he’s knife deep in someone’s chest. Doesn’t make it any less of a problem.” Damian’s ability to sound like an eyeroll is terrifyingly impressive. Still... he’s right.

“Afraid I’ll have to team up with Robin on this one, Red. It might be a trap sure, but I’m not letting up before I’m certain it’s *not*. So –“ Dick stops dead in his tracks, face involuntarily turning a little to the right. Something just tickled past him, something hot and bitter on the way down.

Something that rips at the battered remains of his heart.

“Wing?” Bruce’s voice is somewhere far away –

The unexpected appearance of whiskey and smoke is a punch to the gut.

Oh, *fuck no*.

Sudden, blistering anger makes Dick clamp his lips together to keep from losing a snarl. He bites his tongue in the process, but the pain doesn’t kill the twitch his body makes. Can’t hide the instinctive move to get *closer*.

“Dick?” Bruce’s voice is closer than before. He must have taken control of the panels. “What’s wrong?”

There are no physical signs of his presence. No footsteps have echoed between the sad brick walls surrounding them, no shadows moving like predators in the dark. Only the scent betrays him. And that gigantic, all-enveloping presence of his that has Dick’s body at war with itself, unable to decide whether it wants to die or become alive again.

Home, home, homeless.

Dick loses a harsh breath. “M fine. Be back in a sec.”

Without another word he cuts the line.

It only takes a moment, then there’s rustling and –

“It is you.”

And damn it *all*, Dick does not shiver at that deep hoarse rasp, he does *not*. Fingers twitching to reach for an Eskrima stick he turns halfway around instead of pulling it and—maybe—hauling it into the shadows further down. Just to see if he can hit the bastard from this far away. But it's a close fucking call.

“Who else would it be?” He scoffs, thankful that his eyes stay hidden beneath the hood’s darkness when he has to squeeze them shut for a moment. Further down Jason frees himself from the alley wall, moving closer. “I assume you don’t have any other exes capable of hijacking stereotypes.” He pauses, grinding his teeth against the bitter realization that he can’t, in fact, assume anything about Jason anymore.” Then again, five year’s a long time.”

His words drip poison and Jason stops his advance. It's quiet for the longest time.

“Yeah.” Jason eventually agrees, voice deceptively even. It smokes through the air between them. “And the salute. You always did that.”

Fuck him for remembering anything at all.

“Why are you here? Last time we saw each other, you made your feelings about *this* pretty clear.” Dick gestures to the space between them.

All lights in the alley have very conveniently gone out except the one closest to Jason. After another moment of damned silence, he takes an additional step forward, big body revealed by the soft, yellow light.

Anger is hot and ruining under Dick’s skin, creeping towards his eyes like tiny pinpricks because unfortunately, the club light didn’t lie; Jason looks like himself. Leather jacket covering some faded tee fighting for its life, stretched over a stupid-broad chest, and ripped jeans in dark wash. No signs of bullet holes or the trouble of them

anywhere. Even the boots are laced the exact same as four years ago, intricate and entirely too time-consuming.

“*What’ya mean dumb? It’s pretty!*” Jason had sounded like a petulant child and Dick had laughed in return, planting his lips against a pillow-soft smile. Now those lips rip into a thin imitation of that same stretch, pulling a harsh face closer to kindness. But Dick’s not gonna fall for the same lie twice.

“Could ask you the same thing, Blue. Why back in sunny Gotham all of a sudden?” Jason’s eyes are aching in their familiarity and the hurt is zinging Dick’s fingertips now.

He tilts his head. “Wouldn’t you like to know.”

“Yeah, actually. Seeing as you were doing business at the *Smoke* last night.”

“What?” Dick loses a dry laugh. “Think I’m here because of you?”

Jason doesn’t answer, but his face goes carefully blank, which–

“Oh, that’s cute.” Keeping his cool is becoming increasingly difficult as the anger builds. This asshole actually thinks Dick came back for him? “Now, why the fuck would I do that?”

Instead of reacting to the threat laced into every vowel, Jason simply shrugs. “Revenge.”

His deep voice echoes between the walls, pushing and pushing and pushing. Once it whispered of an entire life together. Once it made promises so filthy that Dick came on the spot. Now? It’s not a conscious choice, but Dick doesn’t regret it when an Eskrima stick imbeds itself into the bricks behind Jason. Not when it finally makes him flinch out of the way, mouth dropping open in shock.

“Holy *shit*, ome –“

“Shut your fucking mouth, Jason,” Dick hisses, ripping off his hood before he can think any better of it and then he’s stalking over, second Eskrima already in hand. Something unidentifiable flickers across Jason’s face only to disappear again immediately. His lips tighten into a thin line, eyes wary as they shift between the weapon in Dick’s white-knuckled grip and the revealed, upper part of his face.

“Just *stop talking* you bag of dicks, or I swear the next thing that shatters won’t be the wall.”

He makes himself stop a step away, pointing the Eskrima at Jason with a trembling hand. This close the whiskey-smoke is damn well knee-buckling. It’s got Dick’s omega weeping because that’s *alpha*, and *alpha doesn’t want us*.

Despair tightens his throat, but all Jason does is stare at him, the threat of Dick’s drawn weapon seemingly forgotten.

“I don’t give a single, tiny fuck about what or who you’re doing. *Why* I’m here is none of your business. What I did at *Smoke* is none of your business. If you think I have even a minute to spare you, try again. And don’t you fucking *dare*,” his voice goes higher, and he hates that just as much as he hates the way Jason’s eyes roam across his face, just a tad bit desperate, “call me omega,” that last word breaks on an angry moan, “that’s not a privilege you have anymore.”

A strangled sound escapes Jason and he reaches for Dick, perhaps out of some deep-rooted alpha-instinct, but Dick twists away with a snarl, jumping for the ladder to the exterior stairs above them. The air stinks of sad, angry alpha, but Dick’s not interested in figuring out Jason’s motives, not anymore.

He heaves himself up, pushing the button on his mask that engages the pheromone filter when he’s flat on his feet again because his omega is at war with his mind right now, and he’s minus three seconds away from jumping back down to take care of his hurt alpha. Which is equally as horrifying a thought as it is tragic. Less than a hundred words from the mouth of this man and all Dick has rebuild since *he* ruined it comes tumbling down again.

“Please,” Jason whispers as Dick pulls down the hood once more to hide another round of unwanted tears. He’s not sure who he’s crying for; himself or the life that remains shattered between them.

Unable not to he allows himself a glance, confused by the pain etched around Jason’s mouth. If he didn’t know any better, Dick would say that’s misery turning green eyes dark.

But he does. Because reality is that Jason tossed them out the second he got too close to happiness, and Dick despises him for that. So, he

can cry, he can regret.

Jason can do whatever he wants, just not with Dick.

“Beg,” he hisses, turning away. “See where that gets you.”

Jason’s kitchen is always warm in that soft, gentle way that has Dick yawning around every second word. Especially in the mornings.

He’s flipping pancakes through the hazy fog of recently awakened eyes, a cup of coffee half empty at his side. Outside the sky is lilac and pink and the sun is only just waking up too. Inside it smells of the spices he put in the batter and smokey whiskey during a storm.

Strong arms wrap around his waist, pulling until Dick abandons the pancakes with a laugh and tilts his head back onto a shoulder.

“Beautiful,” Jason mutters against Dick’s skin, voice fantastically deep this early in the morning. “What did I do to deserve this?”

“Want a list?” Dick whispers back and loses a content sigh at the kiss pressed to his jugular.

Jason snorts. “It would be a short one.”

Reaching back to sink a hand into thick hair, Dick carts through it blindly. The knots he finds he disentangles gently as Jason’s lips ghost across his jaw.

“Objection.”

“Oh?”

Dick smiles. “Mhm. It would be embarrassingly long. You could use it as a scarf.”

“Please,” Jason grumbles, but it sounds dangerously amused. “That would be a shit way of branding. I’d lose all my scary credibility.”

“If that’s the problem I’ll be the scary one, alpha.”

This time Jason groans, teeth latching onto Dick's neck inches from the mating bite. Hot want sings through his gut and he arches back, ass grinding into the hardness behind him.

"You already are, omega."

In the end the last pancake burns to a crisp, and Dick comes at least three times on the kitchen floor before the sun has completely risen. He's running a hand up and down Jason's spine, reveling in the heavy weight of his alpha draped over him.

Blinking through the haze of post-orgasmic bliss, Dick eventually says, "I'm serious, you know."

Jason hums his question, sound rumbling through him. Sunbeams stretch across the ceiling, changing shape only momentarily when a bird rushes past outside.

"You make sure to deserve me every day, Jason," Dick whispers, and Jason stiffens on top of him. "There wouldn't be a list long enough in the entire world. I hope I do at least half of that for you as well."

In a matter of seconds Dick is repositioned; on his side and wrapped in his alpha, face squished into a pec. He blinks in surprise but keeps quiet, allowing Jason to find his own answer. Whenever they hit another stone to be turned like this, Dick buckles in and waits. It's the least he can do.

For a very long time the body around his own shakes silently and they just lay there on the kitchen floor, moving closer to the part of their life spelled forever.

If they haven't already made it.

"You do so much more than that, Dick," Jason eventually whispers. Maybe one day he'll let Dick see him cry too.

Dick doesn't remember a lot after he left Jason in the alley, except

that it's very hard to keep up a sprint when you're crying your heart out. In the end he tumbles into the manor and directly into Bruce who opens the door for him, totally out of breath, but somehow not done weeping despite the very real lack of air in his lungs.

"Richard," his dad whispers, arms wrapping around him. They're on the floor before Dick knows it, Bruce all around him, yet whiskey smoke relents like an incurable disease.

"I hate him. *Hate him*, Bruce. I do."

"Yeah," Bruce whispers into his hair. "I know."

So, if nothing else, Dick's father will always let him lie.

The next morning some very confused civilians find three dumpsters ruined in a dingy back alley on their morning commute to work.

"There're not *wolves* in the city, Ma'am," officer Mark sighs, and wonders if he might have to call animal control.

"This is Gotham, officer. Be careful what you promise."

There's a missed call from an unknown number on Dick's phone. And a message. He doesn't read it, only catches the first part of a 'please' before he blocks it. Asshole.

Chapter End Notes

Lizzo here to mend broken hearts and let us be badasses about it

(song is 'truth hurts' just to be on the safe side and if anybody wants to know)

counting four

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: mentions of drugs and recreational drug use

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sometimes. Just *sometimes*, Dick wonders if Bruce should get rid of some of all his strays.

Like right now.

“Honestly Dick,” Steph sighs, giving him a very critical once over that really isn’t needed. Or appreciated. “You look pathetic. This –“ she waves a hand—at the rumpled bathrobe and his messy hair he presumes—with a tiny scrunch of her nose, “is just tragic. Where’s my fabulously slutty and ridiculously expensive older brother at, huh? He dead? Killed by some fucking alpha?”

“I’m considering killing *you*,” Dick grumbles, stomping to the breakfast table the others are already seated at. *Everyone* is seated at, actually, because for some reason the entire family has decided to show up. Duke, at least, gives him a quiet wave and a kind smile, so maybe Dick will spare him. Jury’s still out on Babs and Kate who’s having some weird, telepathic talk via their eyebrows alone.

Steph though, she’s gotta go.

“Please,” she scoffs, eyes rolling so far back it has to hurt. “I’m your favorite. What’re we gonna do about it?”

“Nothing.” Dick stabs a pancake instead of his sister, pointing a finger at Tim to acquire the maple syrup. “I’m on a job.”

“Joker, yeah, so I’ve heard. Tell me something, brother.”

“Purple does suit you, Steph, don’t listen to Tim,” he mumbles around a mouthful of pancake and bitterness.

“Alright, not my question but thank you. Timothy, please schedule me in for later this day.”

Tim shoots Dick a glare worthy of the ones Bruce usually makes his

executives cry with. “After all I’ve done for you.”

“Break a leg, Tim.”

“Dick!”

He groans, putting his forehead on the table. “*What, Steph?!* ” Why can’t she just let him wallow in peace? “Joker’s threatening to take over the world with his cuckoo-bullets, so Jason being a pain in my ass is seriously gonna have to fucking wait.”

Of course Alfred decides to enter the room just then, shrewd eyes landing on Dick. “Language, Master Richard,” he sniffs. “One would think I raised you better than that.”

“We raised him better than that, Alfred,” Bruce pipes up from behind his paper, the coward.

“Yes. Of course, sir. We did.”

Now Dick knows where Damian learned to sound like eyeroll.

Clearly Steph’s had enough of being ignored because she slams her fists into the table and kicks Dick in the shin to get his attention. Narrowing her eyes, she cuts off his whining protest with a raised hand.

“Everybody shut up and let me talk. One; I never asked you to give up the case, dimwit. I mean sure, you’re a man, but can you at least pretend to be capable of multitasking,” okay rude, Dick isn’t a devout feminist just to be called a *man*, “two; you didn’t let me finish! Richard Grayson Wayne isn’t the world’s most eligible bachelor and front-page darling just to hole up in his room, and cry over some dumb alpha who didn’t know the treasure he possessed. So, instead of doing that, Timmy, you, and I are gonna go be dazzling and beautiful *and* stop Joker.”

“We are?” Tim frowns.

Dick bites his lip. “You think I’m a treasure?”

“The most beautiful, amazing and wonderful treasure I know,” Steph promises, voice not the least bit teasing anymore. His throat burns. “And the sluttiest.”

“Thank you,” he laughs, although it sounds dangerously close to a snivel, something quiet and calm settling back into him.

“Could we please not call Dick a slut,” Bruce grumbles. “I don’t think you’re supposed to do that at the dinner table.”

“You ‘think’?” Conner rolls his eyes. “This family is so weird.”

“And you’re never getting out,” Tim says. “Calling Dick a slut is like calling Damian a demon. He likes it.”

Snickering at the exasperated sigh Alfred leaves the room with, Dick turns to Steph. “So, I’m getting to wear one of my wardrobes, right?”

Her eyes twinkle with wicked delight. “Oh, definitely.”

There are four wardrobes in Dick’s life at the moment, which is a pretty big deal for him. Usually, he’s operating on three.

Two are located at the manor, one dedicated to suits appropriate for speeches and dinners at Wayne Enterprises and the occasional funeral or wedding. The other one; not so appropriate. It’s lovingly been dubbed ‘Dick’s closet of hot immorality’ by the family, and once upon a time it would get updated every other day. Either because Dick found some new, skimpy thing that’s lacking at least fifty percent fabric, or because a large chunk of the pre-existing clothes had migrated to the third wardrobe in his life. The one at his own apartment in Bludhaven.

That one’s a decent mix of suits and stockings, but it’s also where he keeps the real slutty shit out of deference to his family. Or kept, rather.

Now, though.

He grins at the package in wardrobe number four. It’s charmingly big, draped with a red ribbon which is definitely good news for the rising arousal simmering in his gut. The next heat is just around the corner which means he’s perpetually semi-aroused right now, but whenever Jason’s around—which is all the time, let’s be real—his already hyperactive sex drive reaches mindboggling levels. And it effects Jason in such a good way.

"For me, alpha?" He purrs, dancing out of Jason's grabby hands just for the tensions it breeds. "It's the third time this week."

"If you would rather I stop –" Jason raises a single eyebrow, imperious as all fuck, and Dick glares at him. He's already pulling at the bow, greedy hands flinging the lid away.

"No, you can continue."

"How gracious, little omega."

Dick grins at him and Jason huffs a laugh, exasperated fondness almost driving out the lust turning his eyes black. Almost, but never quite succeeding. He jerks his chin. "Come on Dickie, don't have all day, do we?"

Nope, they don't, 'cause tonight Gotham's dirties and perviest are gonna see just what they're missing out on and Dick can't wait.

"Alpha," he breathes when the slippery dress pools between his fingers like liquid silver. There's a slid to bare his thigh, elegant pearls covering just his shoulder and baring his chest.

Dick's gonna come right fucking now he's so turned on.

He looks back to Jason, moving closer until their chest's touch. Jason; who's clearly doing his best not to pounce judging by the tense muscles in his neck and the naked hunger in his eyes, and although Dick's tall he does have to bend his neck a little to catch his alpha's gaze with his own. Like he didn't already have it. Like it's not always on him.

"This is beautiful," he murmurs, gripping Jason's chin in hand. "You're spoiling me."

"Yes." Jason dips, sucking Dick's thumb into his mouth with a little groan, "I am. Anything you want baby and s'yours. Know this."

His attention is heavy on Dick, tongue sucking and biting at his finger, and Dick's so fucking wet he's dripping.

"Fuck me," he whines, pressing closer to Jason so he can rub his aching cunt against the thick thigh he's immediately offered. "Now, alpha."

In less than a breath he's kindly slammed into the wall.

The fourth wardrobe is filled by his alpha, and it's Dick's favorite.

There's something mediative about being draped head-to-toe in designer brands and towering above everyone else in five-inch heeled boots of black leather, so yeah, whatever; Steph was right--again.

"How exactly is an auditorium of college students gonna help Dick stop Joker?" Tim asks.

Not looking up from the mission of painting her nails a defiant purple, Steph shrugs. "It's common knowledge Gotham college students know everything. Besides, when you're done talking, I bet they'll be so out of it with boredom Dick can ask them anything."

"It's business majors, Steph. They're creaming their pants simply knowing I'm on my way to grace their day and minds."

"Oh, right. I forgot. Nerds. It'll never fail to amaze me how many people out there actually like math."

Tim sighs like only the long-suffering can manage it, and Dick snickers at the wicked glint in Steph's eyes.

"The stealth work you do really isn't that different. Gathering and processing data is a vital part of running a business as well, you know. And we're not doing math all day for fuck's sake. Usually, it feels like I'm handling an entire kindergarten of drunk toddlers with attitude problems. It requires people skills." Tim looks out the tinted glass of the limousine. "We're here."

Across from Dick his sister mouths *people skills* with an incredulous look, and this time he fails to kill a snort. Tim's excellent at what he does, definitely, but people aren't really his forte. There's a bet going on at the manor with two active pools on who'll get the most adults to cry in a month: Tim or Bruce. For the past three months that honor has gone to their dear brother.

(Bruce, who knows about the betting pool, isn't happy. And neither

are his executives)

“How long will it take?” Dick asks, stretching his legs as the limo comes to a stop in front of Gotham University.

There’s already a mass of people waiting outside, howling and screaming for a glimpse of Gotham’s finest. Bruce Wayne is much too adored to ever be connected with the infamous and feared Batman, and if Dick wasn’t so fond of the cowls and masks, he probably would be able to forgo them entirely. Clark doesn’t wear one. Amazing what a pair of glasses and the tiniest adjustment of an attitude can do, really.

Tim has slid to the door, eyes bright and burning as he waits for the guards to give them the clear. Hadn’t he been knee-deep in the criminal undergoing of Gotham, Dick thinks his brother would’ve made a fine teacher. It’s a sad little thought, one he pushes away. Their lives have never been simple, but they’re good and mostly safe which is all any of them can ask for.

“Nothing more than an hour, I think. But they’re allowed questions at the end and I’m not cutting those short,” Tim adds, a little defensively.

Dick reaches out to pat him on the back, just as a guard cracks the door open. “You shouldn’t. When the presentation is done, I’ll make myself scam. Doubt the extinguished business majors have their fingers in the clown-shaped cookie jar.”

Behind them Steph snorts, but it drowns a little in the screaming, as they’re let out of the car. “Oh, you’d be surprised.”

It’s as easy as breathing to pull on a smile brighter than the stars, when Dick slips out after Tim, long coat hissing behind him as he rights himself.

The crowd explodes.

“That’s—is that *Richard*?”

“No way he hasn’t been home for years!”

“Girl, you better fucking catch me, my knees are buckling.”

Beside him Steph sighs. “This is ridiculous. Do they know, you don’t

even do your own laundry? I could tell them.”

Dick just laughs and waves to the masses, winking at a guy who’s honestly looking three seconds away from combusting. “Go ahead, dear sister. No one will ever believe you.”

“Mr. Wayne! Uh, Mr. Grayson Wayne, please—a word?”

Before Dick turns his attention to the reporter Tim grabs his arm, pulling him down to whisper in his ear. “I’m out of here. If you’re late for my words of wisdom I’ll have Conner kill you.”

“Duly noted,” Dick whispers back.

He does make it in time to hear all of Tim’s presentation, which is good, because he’s downright awe-inspiring. He’s going places, always has been, and Dick will level the world if it tries to stop him. Luckily the VIPs are located behind the scenes or said world would’ve seen him lose a tear or five over his little brother.

“Get the fuck out of here and do your job, you disgusting sap,” Steph eventually hisses, nudging him out of his seat when he’s been sniveling and making heart-eyes at Tim for at least half an hour.

The halls are mostly quiet as Dick strides through them, heels clacking and jacket whooshing, but that’s perfectly fine. The people he’s looking for aren’t out here anyways, and he can’t be seen talking to junkies without raising suspicion. The last thing Nightwing needs when Joker is threatening the world is Dick Grayson in a drug scandal. He ends up writing five autographs (but only one on a boob which is a lot less than he’s accustomed to) before he makes it to the last bathroom at the end of the last hallway. It’s dark down here, and completely desolate.

One would think so, at least, was it not for the stupid giggling floating through the cracked door in front of him. Besides, it may be quite some time ago now, but Dick’s attended Gotham University too—he knows his way around.

“Here we go,” he tells himself. “Be dumb Dick, you can definitely do

that.”

Pushing the door open he stumbles in.

Five pairs of hazy eyes blink at him in stumped confusion as he rights himself, making a great show of looking surprised.

“Oops,” he laughs, bashful. “Wrong door.”

“You’re Richard Wayne,” one of the junkies say, some dude with hair greasier than his beanie. Then, “you smoke?”

Bless these people and their priorities. Dick adores them. “Ah, no!” He waves his hands. “That’s a long time ago, I stay out of it these days.”

One of the girls nods, a sad look in her eyes. “Can’t imagine it’s easy. Ya know, with all the media.”

Dick cracks a little sigh in exaggerated agreement.

“Dude, listen. Ever want a hit without a tell,” beanie-guy makes a large gesture at the room. “We’re your people.”

“Thanks,” Dick says, a man who has never even smoked a cigarette without throwing up. “Will do. Can I ask... what are you –“ he nods toward the powder on the dirty bathroom tiles, greener than grass, like he doesn’t fucking know. Honestly, he’s keeping himself by a tight leash, seconds away from doing a little victory dance, because this is what you call jackpot ladies and gentlemen.

“Yeah, sure man! K, powder form. Ever done it?”

“Can’t say I have.”

“Shame, it’s great. Makes you all woozy and sleepy. Just—drifting off.”

Some even call it *dead man’s sleep*. Apparently, you kind of clock out for a while after injection, and permanently if you get just a gram wrong, which is why it’s mainly off the streets by now. Bruce really doesn’t like the stuff, for a number of obvious reasons. One of them often clad in flannel.

“That sounds amazing,” Dick laughs, before frowning in feigned

confusion. “Just... last I heard, it was near impossible to acquire.”

Thank God for Damian and his sharp ears. The kid likes to help the junkies out every now and then, knows their language better than themselves. He'd filled Dick in on the latest slang, jokes and gossip going through the community before they left, although Dick kinda feels the word 'jokes' is understood a bit too liberally here.

“Used to be, but there's apparently been made some production mistake somewhere, and now there's a *lot*. It's not as good as the expensive stuff, but you know,” Beanie shrugs. “Beggars can't be choosers.”

“So what,” Dick hums after they're done laughing, “you guys got this at the local diner?”

“No man! That's the great part. One of the families have apparently branched out. Last I checked, they were selling from an abandoned candy-shop down in the Bowery.”

Smiling, Dick tilts his head. “Cool.”

Looks like he's gonna have to change.

It's not all sex, sins, and depravity between them.

Which is the thing.

Usually Dick will tire of the romance-part rather quickly and move on before any deeper feelings can get hurt. He's never stayed with anyone for longer than a few months, simply because it's never been something he needed before.

Now, though... well. Evil tongues claim they dated for a good long while before either of them clocked it—fuck off Kate—so they did go into this relationship on a tearful confession of undying love. It's just that the blissful domesticity still manages to surprise Dick every now and then. Especially by how much he needs and expects it.

“Fuck’s sake,” Jason grumbles, glaring at the tv-screen. “Think the game might be lagging.”

Under him Dick snorts, turning another page in his book. “Or maybe you’re just not as good as you think.”

“Shut your cakehole. I’ve been playing this game since I could walk.”

“Then why can’t you beat the boss?”

An explosive sigh of dramatic annoyance. “Cause the game’s fucking lagging, that’s what I’ve been trying to—now, why the shit are you laughing, Dickie?”

Apparently hiding his fit of snickers behind Jason’s ratty old version of Pride and Prejudice isn’t working as well as Dick thought. He chances a peek out, smiling big and sweet when their eyes lock. “Want me to help you?”

Jason considers this for a moment and honestly, Dick is loath to give up his spot. Jason’s lap is so warm, his thigh such a good pillow, and Mr. Darcy is just about to push his head even further up his pretentious ass. The things you do for love.

“Alright,” Jason sighs, lifting his arms so Dick is free to sit up. “But if you even so much as think about glowering when you beat it on the first try, Dick –“

“Yeah, yeah,” Dick snorts, clambering around until he’s settled vertically in Jason’s lap. Far be it he will give up the snuggles that easily. “You’ll hand me my pert little ass—I get it. The threats are getting old, Jay.”

Grumbling, but otherwise keeping quiet, Jason easily relents his personal space, leaning back and taking Dick along with him. Settled fully against Jason, Dick grabs the controller and hits the retry button.

“What do you think about Mr. Darcy?” Jason asks after a while, chin hooked on Dick’s shoulder so he can follow the maiming, dodging, and general awesomeness Dick is gracefully presenting him. His fingers are circling the bare skin of his abdomen, having sneaked under his shirt a few minutes earlier.

“Elizabeth needs to spank the shit out of his subby little ass, he’s practically

begging for it.”

Jason grunts a content little sound. “Finally, a fellow intellectual. Thank you for that astute observation. Roy called me insane and said I desecrated a timeless classic or some shit when I told him the exact same thing.”

Behind the screen the boss gives a last chilling cry before falling dead to the floor, and Dick twists around so he can peck Jason on the lips. “Don’t listen to the lesser gifted, alpha. It’s beneath you. Also, I won.” He grins widely, poking at the sudden pout on plush lips. “On the first try.”

“You’re very lucky you’re cute,” Jason mumbles, but despite the gruff demeanor his eyes are soft, and Dick gets the biggest thank-you hug in the world.

If there is a god, Dick’s life has got to be his favorite joke.

“I hate you a little for this,” he tells the dumbfounded and severely impaired dealers bleeding all over the floor. “Why have you gotta be his?”

They’re alphas and it shows. Big, burly and a little hotheaded—nothing Dick didn’t get slapped out of them very quickly. It reeks of bruised egos in the room though, because there apparently still exists people who think alphas are superior and unbeatable, despite numerous studies showing such a thing has never actually been the case.

At least it’s become common knowledge that omegas aren’t weak in the knees for just any alpha’s pheromone shower. That it has to be a mate that sends them into unplanned heats (however rarely that happens) has been acknowledged for centuries now. Not that the scent blockers in his jacket allow the alphas even a hint of his secondary gender.

Idiot Number One blinks. “Whose?”

“Don’t even. Do you honestly think I wouldn’t recognize the tattoos?”

Granted they're hidden under blood and grime at the moment, Dick knows what mark of loyalty is etched onto their biceps, glimpsed it as he burst through the doors before guns were pulled and pointed at him.

It's a damned hood, it's in the lower runners' black, and once upon a time Dick considered covering his own bat with that very hood in red, impaled by a sword.

"Does your boss know about this?"

Dick technically doesn't need to ask, but five years is a long time. The Hood he knew back then had sworn off Kryptonite with a ferocious vengeance almost rivaling Superman's. It's just that the bastard behind the mask had also promised him forever and decided to cut that one short, so Dick's gonna play it safe here.

"No," Idiot Number Two grunts, eyes glued to the floor. Feeling sorry for them is a waste of time, Jason's not gonna kill anyone for breaking his rules. He's just gonna make them wish he did.

The Red Hood's men are an exceptional breed; absolutely devoted to their boss, religiously some might call it, and so the punishments for any occasional strays have always been severe. Very rarely has Jason had to deal it out himself, only opts to do so if he feels personally offended by their actions.

Anyway, point is they're telling the truth which is mildly annoying. At least, if Jason had degraded to an absolute scumbag Dick would feel justified to kick him in the nuts. Not that the nut-kicking isn't already justified, he did cheat, but if he started selling drugs like K, Dick might feel good about doing it. Maybe his morality isn't so dubious after all. Bleeding Idiots on the floor notwithstanding.

"This is awful," Dick groans, sheathing his Eskrima sticks. There's a cute little sag to the dealers' shoulders when the weapons are out of sight, like he would ever need anything more than his hands to inflict excruciating pain. "Now I'm gonna have to talk to him. Fuck you."

Idiot Number One winces at the finger three inches from jabbing him in the eye, but wisely keeps quiet. Dick grabs a wobbly old chair, once pink and happy judging by the sorry flakes left here and there, now closer to grey and depressed. And shit. When did a fucking chair become a metaphor for his life? This can hardly get any sadder.

Flopping down on the chair he crosses his legs, pressing a button on the recorder in his pocket. “Okay, here’s the deal: tell me everything you know, and I’ll consider letting you go without snitching.”

Idiot Number One scrunches his nose, giving him a slow up-and-down. “But,” he says, because he clearly operates on less than three braincells. “The truce between the Bats and Hood –“

“Dude, shut up!” Idiot Number Two hisses. Maybe he’s got four braincells. Dick decides he likes Number Two the best, might actually let him get a head start before snitching, but then the fucker continues making noise with his mouth. “Everybody knows there’s some sort of bad blood between the boss and Wing, why would he –“

The Eskrima stick raising his chin thankfully makes him stop talking and start sweating.

Dick nudges his chin higher. “Now, what bad blood are we talking about here?”

“Uh. I.” A pause. “Uhm.”

Placing a knee on the chair between the dealer’s legs Dick leans in, hooded face stopping right behind his ear. “I would recommend you start talking, or the picture we paint are gonna go from seductive to bloody very, *very* quickly.”

The dealer swallows. “It’s just speculations Wing, nothing serious. You and the boss were so close five years ago, and you were always over, until one day. Uh. Until that didn’t happen anymore. Also...” But instead of continuing he quiets, biting his lips like he wishes he never opened his mouth to begin with.

“Don’t stop on my account,” Dick prompts, voice soft in spite of the hurt traveling his spine.

They noticed. He’d been such a permanent fixture in Jason’s life that the moment he wasn’t anymore, people *noticed*. Somehow that makes the entire thing even worse.

It’s Idiot Number One who continues when his partner stubbornly remains silent.

“The boss has been real angry ever since you stopped coming over,”

he mumbles. “Never cruel. Just... cold. And furious. That’s why he got shot last week, lost his temper and didn’t see –”

“For fuck’s sake do you ever *think* –” Idiot Number Two hisses, but Dick’s had more than enough of this Jason talk. Pushing back so hard the dealer under him is momentarily in danger of tipping over he turns his back to them, ignoring the shower of profanities that follow.

I don’t care, Dick tells himself sternly. If Jason has issues with his own dumb choices, it’s got nothing to do with Dick. That’s what fucking ‘round gets you and if he could, he would be happy about this little tidbit of information. Unfortunately, no matter how hard he tries Dick isn’t happy at all. Clearly, Jason doesn’t even have the good grace to stand by his stupid, world-wreaking and heartbreaking decisions, and if Dick finds out he fucking *regrets* it –

It takes a very deep, very long breath before he’s capable of turning back to the dealers, and even then the loop of *that’s why he was shot* is impossible to kill, riling Dick’s omega to levels of pure desperation.

Absolutely perfect.

“Why are you selling K?”

Maybe some of the internal battle between omega and Good Sense has seeped into his voice, because the Idiots answer him immediately.

“There’s a lot of it. We wanted the money,” Number One grumbles.

Dick rubs two fingers against the bridge of his nose, trying to fight off an impending headache.

Ask them about alpha.

“How did you know?”

“We were staking out some of Joker’s goons and they were talking about it. We went to the warehouse they mentioned and... I mean. It was right there for the taking, Wing. What were we supposed to do?”

Ask them about –

“According to Hood’s rules I’m pretty sure the answer is somewhere along the lines of ‘burn the nasty shit,’” Dick sighs, willing his omega

quiet. If Jason wants to play macho let him. Dick certainly won't *fuss*. "I'm gonna ask you something now and then you're gonna forget about it, 'kay?"

The Idiots nod frantically, desperation turning their eyes shiny.

"Ever head of K-bullets?"

It's a gamble worth Tim's judging eyebrows later if Dick's hunch turns out to be wrong. Unwavering loyalty or not, sometimes there are bad seeds, and not even Jason Todd can avoid those. That's why he's made himself so incredibly skilled at weeding. Besides, considering the dealers have already acted against an order as absolute as not selling K, Dick's willing to bet they're greedy enough to join Joker's world-domination agenda too.

And he's not wrong.

They pale almost simultaneously, and as they stumble their way through a truly pathetic excuse of a lie, Dick pulls out his phone.

"I'll say it again," he grumbles sullenly, pressing a number he's meant to delete for about five years now, "fuck you guys."

When Dick tells Bruce, the old sap immediately makes plans for dinner.

"What do you mean no?" Bruce looks at Dick like he's committed patricide. "I've always liked Hood. Now that he's dating my son, I'm required to meet him."

"You have met him. Or did it somehow slip that old brain of yours that you're doing business with him?"

"But that's not the real thing. We have to be civilized. I want to meet him here."

"And you will, but not when you're all tied up about it," Dick whines. "You'll embarrass me."

“Richard Grayson Wayne, when have I ever embarrassed you before? That is not nice, I’m a cool dad.”

“... want me to email you the document or would you prefer print?”

The door shuts softly behind Dick as he ventures out into the cold, phone pressed to his ear with a hammering heart. The Idiots are not getting a front row seat to this.

It’s a rare cloudless night in Gotham—especially by fall’s murky, rainy standards—and for a moment, Dick considers fleeing back to Metropolis.

Then the phone picks up.

“Dick?” It’s breathless, a little frantic maybe and a lot suspicious. Like Jason can’t quite believe it—which is fair. The unknown number earlier that day told Dick, Jason certainly didn’t expect him to have kept his number.

Metropolis isn’t that far, he reminds himself. Bruce has a private jet and if Dick hangs up now and texts Jason the location he’ll figure things out himself.

“There’s no easy way to say this,” he eventually sighs, ignoring the sharp intake of air on the other end of the line, “but I got a pair of your boys tied and beat up at the Bowery.”

Better to make sure Jason doesn’t walk into this blindly. Dick doesn’t know how much Jason trusts him anymore but, despite emotionally, Jason has never hurt him. Would never even dare to think about it. Dick simply doesn’t want an escalation of something that can be handled swiftly and without pain, and mafia politics are messy, whimsical things on the best of days.

There’s a long pause where all he can hear is Jason’s even breathing and the quiet murmur of conversation in the background. “Deserved?”

He asks, just when Dick thinks he's about to get hung up on.

"Well, by your standards when it comes to dealing K, I would say I've been gentle."

Jason curses. "Idiots."

Frowning, Dick cuts himself off before his dumb mouth can agree in any way or form. "Does that mean you're swinging by to pick up the trash? I'm an annoyed and busy man at the moment, so sometime soon is unnegotiable."

A thump and a soft yelp from the background travel across the line. "Where are you?"

He recites the address easily, but Jason only gets out a tentative, "give me five," before Dick hangs up.

Cursing loudly for a solid three minutes without anyone batting an eye is only possible in the Bowery, and Dick milks that privilege dry. When he stomps back into the candy-shop-turned-drug-den, the dealers wisely keep their mouths shut. Dick doesn't say anything to them, just jumps onto the dirty counter after making sure no needles will go anywhere near his butt. Then he waits.

Five minutes and forty-three seconds later the sound of a car rolling to a stop outside makes one of the Idiots look up. He stares at the closed door for a moment before turning pleading eyes to Dick, who just smiles wryly in return.

"What did you think would happen?"

The flattened bell above the door makes a hoarse cough as it's jostled, the only warning any of them get before Jason Todd strides in, all big and alpha and angry –

And Dick almost leaps from the counter to tackle the bastard.

Either Jason has been dabbling in make-up or he's a better actor than Dick thought, because in the flickering light of the spots above them, Jason certainly looks like someone with bullet-holes in him. Some very serious bullet-holes, judging from the slight limp he tries to hide by turning to Dick.

(It's a little annoying how he doesn't even have to search for him, despite the heavy shadows at the counter. He just enters and immediately finds Dick)

There must have been make-up, he thinks, absentminded, staring at the dark bags under Jason's eyes, and wonders if the gaze roving over his body might just leave behind actual burns.

Jason's skin is pale and there's a tight pull to his lips, but both things can easily be played off as a trick of the light or genuine inconvenience caused by the situation at hand.

"Wing," he greets, sinful voice steady. How he manages to sound like sex-on-legs while clearly being in great pain is beyond science and just not fair. First, he doesn't look hurt at all, and now the dickhead has the gall to use his gravelly *I-will-fuck-you-so-good* voice. Granted that's normally how he sounds but come *on*.

Instead of throwing a hissy-fit, because he's a fucking adult, Dick inclines his head.

"Hood."

Then, just to give himself a momentary relief, he tilts a little to the side, eyes catching red hair and a scowl worthy of rivalling Damian's. "Hey, Arsenal. Long time no see."

Roy's eyes slide to Dick for all of a second before returning to the dealers. "Yeah, good to see you, Nightwing," he says, strolling closer to the quivering fools. "And good job. Although, as a fellow enforcer, I must say I'm a little embarrassed."

"Don't be." Dick gives a valiant try at ignoring the stare Jason keeps at him, and fails miserably. It's burning and demanding, like there isn't an audience or appearances to be kept up at all.

"It was a simple stroke of luck I found these lovelies. The K they didn't manage to sell has been dealt with."

"Thanks," Roy snorts dryly, finally sparing Dick more than half a look. There's something not far from sadness hidden behind his mask of professionalism, but then he's striding forward, and the moment is gone. Grabbing the dealers by their arms he hoists them up, uncaring for their pained protests.

"Shut the fuck up. When I'm done with you, you'll thank Nightwing

for being such a nice guy,” he grumbles, dragging them across the room. When they pass Jason—who’s *still* fucking staring—the poor fools flinch, apparently unaware about the utter lack of attention on them.

The door shuts quietly, and Dick and Jason are left alone in the echoing silence.

It goes on for a long beat, the space between them filled with thick tension none of them seems to know how to eradicate and Dick once again sends a quiet thanks to Tim’s genius and the filters in his mask. Jason looks ready to topple over, the look in his eyes not far from desperate. It doesn’t take a genius to figure out what he smells like at the moment and—despite the resentment and hurt—Dick isn’t above admitting his reaction to that will definitely be some serious omega-fuss.

Thing is, he’s had a decision to make, and in the time between he hung up the phone and Jason arrived, he’s also come to a conclusion. A conclusion that might just end at the point of Damian’s withering glare, but so be it. World-domination-by-clown isn’t how Dick plans to go down, and if that means playing civil with his ex-boyfriend, he’ll simply have to put on his big-boy pants.

And eventually take off his mask. But that time, that bridge and all that.

Dick pulls himself together with a hard exhale, says, “so, you *are* hurt then,” and Jason, the absolute fool, says, “no,” completely stone-faced like Dick’s an idiot who’ll believe him.

Annoyed, he raises a brow behind the hood, grinding his teeth.

“It’s fine,” Jason says eventually, when the silence becomes too loud.

Quickly, so Jason doesn’t have the time to react, Dick leans into his space and jabs two fingers into his gut.

It’s not even that hard—he doesn’t feel good kicking a man already down, vagrant cock regardless—but Jason goes down like a dropped sack of potatoes, knees hitting the floor with a dull thud. The sound almost drowns in a choked shout of pain, and Dick sits back again, crossing his legs. His omega might disagree, but the picture Jason currently paints is very pretty.

"I still don't appreciate being lied to, Jason. Have you even had it looked at?"

Green eyes are watery as they catch his, but there's no accusation to be found in them. Dick shifts in discomfort. He expected a glare, if nothing else for the infliction of pain, yet there's nothing but hurt on Jason's face.

"Yes," Jason eventually gets out, winded. He raises a single leg, tentatively putting some weight on it. Dick watches with twitching hands as he clambers back onto his feet, keeping a tight leash on the instinct to help. "Bizzarro looked, poked, and stitched me up. S'nothing else to do but wait for it to heal –"

Is he an idiot? "Are you an idiot?"

Dick doesn't mean to snarl, to sound so affected by it, and clearly it surprises Jason too because he blinks silently.

"For fuck's sake," Dick hisses, looking away. "You need to have it looked at by a professional."

"The bullet went clean through. It's just the flank, pure meat."

"Good for you, still leaves a hole." God. Alphas and their incessant idea of powering through. It's a miracle they aren't extinct already, but then again, that's probably thanks to the omegas. Case in point.

Jason frowns at Dick, looking him up and down with the same intensity from earlier. Like he can somehow see through the mask and the hood if only he tries hard enough.

"Why are you still here, Wing?" He whispers, something resigned taking over his face. Dick tenses as Jason shrugs. "Could've left me a note."

Anger flares, swift and bright.

"Fuck you," Dick hisses jumping to his feet. "I'm aware of your opinion about having me around, no need for a recap! Trust me, could I have it any other way I would still be miles away from –"

"Shit, Dick that's not what I meant!" Jason barks, holding up his

hands, and despite the alarm he looks *exhausted*. Like he's been... well, like he has been fighting for his life. Dick presses his lips together, hands back to their useless twitching.

"I just –" Jason sighs, completely deflating. It's such an uncommon sight that all anger leaves Dick immediately.

Regardless of his flaws and the cowardice that broke Dick's heart, Jason has always been a mountain to him. An absolute unit of power unable to be brought down by anything. Even when he detested his alpha the most, Dick still thought of him as the strongest, safest place in the world. But right now, in an abandoned candy-shop covered in debris and broken dreams, Jason looks small. And finished. Like the weight of the world has finally caved in on him.

He leans against a pillar, shoulders slumping. "Just thought you wouldn't waste the time on me. Not saying you're here because you *want* to waste time, I –" Jason groans, rolling his eyes. "Fuck's sake. This is embarrassing."

Dick blinks completely thrown off the rail, and a little surprised at the show of introspection.

"Extremely," he agrees after a moment, and Jason whips his attention back to him, evidently caught off guard by the sudden shift of mood. Dick can hardly fault him for that, to be honest he's a little whiplashed himself.

They look at each other for another embarrassingly long time.

"Ugh." Dick eventually says. "Fine, listen. I have something to show you, but it'll require of you to get into my car, tone down those pheromones, and listen to everything I say, no whining. Deal?"

He stares hard at Jason, not that he can see it with the hood up, willing him to decline because if he doesn't...

"Deal," Jason says easily.

Well.

Dick points a threatening finger at him. "You stay there, I'll be back in a sec."

“Yes’sir,” Jason mumbles, a tiny smile playing on his lips, which Dick elects to ignore as he stomps out to tell Roy he’s kidnapping his boss.

Funnily enough, despite the dramatic confession of love and the subsequent, vicious fucking that sends both of them into an early heat and rut for about a week, the mating bite happens much further down the line.

Jason eyes Dick’s neck for about a week before doing anything about it. A week during which he’s considerably more annoyed than usual, snapping and biting at his poor men at the slightest inconvenience, and has Roy throw hard things at him more than once. In the end his enforcer goes to Dick for help.

“I’ve hit my limit here, Dickie,” Roy whines. “The next thing that hits the fucker is gonna be a bullet, I can feel it.”

So, later that day, Dick takes on his sacred omega duties and asks his grumpy alpha what the fuck’s crawled up his ass. Jason looks properly chastened, slumped on the couch and refusing to meet Dick’s eyes.

The entire apartment smells of simmering arousal, but also confliction and distress. It sets Dick on edge, soothing pheromones reaching out as answer.

“Alpha,” he warns, voice going low. *If Jason doesn’t want to talk to him that’s fine, but if he does and can’t get his head out of his ass long enough to do it, Dick’s gonna help him. Manually, if need be. The tone works its magic however, as Jason shifts around a little more before finally meeting Dick’s eyes.*

“We haven’t,” he says, and the scent of distressed alpha turns annoyed.

Dick raises a brow at the change. “Haven’t what? Fucked in public? Cooked spaghetti and meatballs together? Gone furniture shopping? All of that can be arranged rather quickly, Jay –“

A growl—all alpha and demanding.

“Mating bite,” Jason grits out, eyes glowing. Suddenly they refuse to leave Dick altogether, and now the room doesn’t smell of annoyance anymore at

all. The overwhelming arousal thickening the air pulls at Dick's own, and he's frozen to his spot at the kitchen isle, staring at Jason with his mouth hanging open.

Something hot and primal works its way under his skin.

Jason sits up a little straighter, body tense and attention latched onto Dick.

"Haven't claimed you properly yet, omega," he whispers, voice turning sweet, no doubt smelling the change in Dick too. "Don't you want my mark on you? Let everyone know who you belong to? Who I belong to."

Of course Dick wants the mating bite, has been a little obsessed with the thought as well lately. He's simply been wondering how to broach the subject. Neither of them has done permanent before, and Dick's honestly been a little scared of his own reaction to it. Everything's so good between them, genuinely good, and he would rather die than lose that. But shit. He should have known. With Jason's words echoing out between them, and the hungry desperation fixed on him, Dick can't imagine a world in which he doesn't bear the mark of Jason's claim. Or Jason his.

And, honestly fuck him, the asshole knows exactly how to play Dick until he's putty without any touching.

Abandoning the couch Jason saunters closer, eyes dark. Starving. He looks like a predator on the hunt and damn if it doesn't make Dick want to roll over.

"Sure, I'll fuck you in public sometime," he says, casually.

Dick's cunt clenches around a vicious stab of arousal and he has to bite his cheek to avoid moaning. Yeah, Jason knows exactly what to say, caressing the side of Dick that revels in being owned and—when it comes to Jason, only then—own in return.

"But when I'm not, what then omega? How are the people gonna know it's me fucking screams out of you every night? Me that gets to touch you, feed you, clothe you?"

Dick's gonna come untouched if this goes on. He makes a move to close the gap between them, annoyed at the slow pace his alpha keeps, but Jason tuts.

The order is clear; he is to stay where he is until alpha tells him otherwise.

Sweltering omega submission pools at his spine when Jason comes to a stop in front of him, looking down but not touching. With their bodies inches apart like this, Jason feels all encompassing. He radiates heat which Dick drinks greedily, eyes closing on a whine.

“Answer me, omega.”

But Dick doesn't want to use his words, entire body thrumming for release, for the promise of being Jason's forever. And for –

A hand wraps around his throat and Dick opens his eyes on an approving moan.

Jason stares down at him, wild abandon painting him with primal beauty. “How will they know you're the one who makes me kneel, Dick?”

Snarling, Dick pushes and Jason relents, allowing himself to be tackled to the floor.

There's mirth in those green eyes. Joy and love and hunger, and the sharp edge of arousal blunts a bit, turns soft. Dick—straddling Jason's hips—bends down, nosing up his cheek.

“You will be mine, alpha?” He whispers, making absolutely sure. Thankfully, outside of a heat, the pheromones aren't mind-numbing, and Dick isn't gonna let Jason make a decision he'll regret later.

But his alpha just grins, big and certain. “Always,” he promises. “You'll be mine too, omega?”

There's only one answer for that.

Later they come together, Dick fucked open on Jason's knot with a mouthful of skin and blood each; and they seal a promise to each other finally spelled forever.

Chapter End Notes

some good old angst featuring Dick's dramatic coat

oh, also, the thing about Mr. Darcy being a sub isn't my revelation, I saw it on a textpost some time ago, I don't remember where though

-- thank you so much to everyone who's reading this mess! kudos

are wildly appreciated if you liked it! <3 and to everyone commenting, you're wonderful, I'll do my absolute best to answer

breathe you in

Chapter Notes

!!Warning!! for implied gun violence (no shooting, only threatening)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Roy doesn't seem too concerned with leaving Jason in Dick's debatable care which is mildly alarming. For all he knows Dick may try to off his boss. When it comes down to it, though, Roy frankly seems *relieved* as he stoves the Idiots into his trunk and speeds off.

So, okay. Jason's been more of a pain in the ass than usual, lately. What had the dealers said? Angry, reckless. Getting shot. Dick glares at the candy shop. If it turns out Jason regrets what he—well.

Dick's gonna fucking murder him.

“Doing what you're told for once?” He drawls, sauntering back inside to find Jason slumped exactly where he left him. The pillar he's leaning against is taking the brunt of his weight and honestly looks two seconds from collapsing, so Dick waves him along.

Before Jason gets a chance to answer, Dick speaks again. Just to avoid hearing that deep rumble for longer than necessary. “Are you aware Arsenal has just, quite willingly I might add, left you in the claws of your angry, bitter, and sometimes incredibly violent, ex-boyfriend? He seemed pretty happy about it too.”

There's a backdoor leading into a forgotten alley behind the shop in which Dick's car is parked, but before leaving entirely he makes a stop in the old breakroom.

Jason mutters something under his breath that's too quick to catch.

“I've been a bit, uh. On edge, lately.” He says, louder. “Roy needs a break. If it expands into a lifetime vacation because you decide to murder me, then good for him.”

“Don't tempt me, Jay.”

Dick reaches up and pulls his hood down, then unzips the jacket and

throws it on a chair, leaving him in his long-sleeved, black undershirt and the mask. He glances at Jason who's gone back to being quiet and staring again.

This sucks.

"Now is when you reign in the pheromone show," Dick warns him, narrowing his eyes. He's not sure how well the message is received because Jason just keeps staring at his face. They don't have much time however, so when he nods, Dick takes a deep breath and steels himself before pulling off his mask.

It hits him right in solar plexus, but not cruelly or painfully. Not at all.

The soft blanket of Jason's scent is more like sinking into a warm bath after a few, long *years*. Soft, because he's actually gotten control of it except for one, painful minute where it spikes, only to promptly be tampered down again.

Dick can't help the breathy sigh that blows past his lips, or the way his eyes fall shut at the peace. Can't help how his entire body caves in on itself as he's finally enveloped in his alpha's scent. Air expands his lungs, and he *breathes*.

Smoke and whiskey and life. It's quiet. Not at all overwhelming.

Excluding the part where homesickness makes his bones moan and ache with longing, of course. But, beggars can't be choosers and all that.

"Dick—" Jason's whispers, a low and sad call and Dick opens his eyes to a blurry world. It takes a second for the horrific realization that he's *crying* to kick in, because he's momentarily arrested by the shadows in Jason's eyes.

There's something shattered hiding there, something Dick won't survive understanding.

Then he blinks and the world clears at the same time he registers the wet on his cheeks.

Fuck. He whips around, rubbing furious hands into his eyes as he stalks to the backdoor and throws it open, so he can stalk angrily into the alley beyond.

"It's just biology," he hisses. "Don't you dare –"

When he reaches for the handle to the sleek, black sportscar Bruce gifted him as a welcome home present, a big hand lands on the roof above him. Jason's not touching, but he's standing close enough for Dick to feel the warmth roll off him; whiskey smoke all around. It's infuriatingly nice on a cold October night.

"Listen to me," Jason says, breath ghosting over the shell of his ear. "Just this once, please?" Dick doesn't move, doesn't say a word which Jason clearly takes as permission because he continues in that same, low gravel. "I'm very clear on where we stand. How you feel and do not feel about me, Dick... Christ, I know, okay? I *get* it. What I did—" he exhales a shuddering breath. "You don't wanna hear my regrets, and you shouldn't. Just—don't think I'm expecting anything of you, please? 'Cause I'm not, I swear. 'Specially not tears."

Dick doesn't know what to say, just stares empty-minded ahead of him, torn between fury and a weird sense of relief. Jason regrets what he did and yeah, Dick could punch him for that. Might even break his nose, just a little.

Except...

(Dick's heart breaks into a billion, tiny pieces for the third time in his life, but after the first few times, it feels more like breathing than dying)

... Except he always knew they would arrive at this particular crossroad.

Jason left out of fear and with fear regret is prone to follow. Which is what hurt the most back then too; standing on a threshold, being denied entrance, as he watched the love of his life destroy what they'd build together and *know*—with spiteful clarity—that he'd regret doing it later. Now Jason simply acknowledges that. He doesn't try to apologize, doesn't waste Dick's time with a dramatic show of repentance or useless excuses. Dick can't be mad at him for *that*, at least. Broken hearted again, yes. But not mad, just weirdly relieved.

"Get in the car," he eventually grouses, and Jason finally moves away, taking his stupid scent with him. Dick can feel heavy eyes on him, the air tinged with sour distress, but for once Jason keeps quiet.

As Dick slides into the driver's seat, Jason opens the door on the other side, which means he gets to watch the big lump fold himself into the car; an endeavor which clearly isn't made any more comfortable by his injuries. Hissing, Jason finally slumps back, hand coming to rest limply on his stomach.

Fucking alphas.

"Put on your seatbelt," Dick orders.

"Don't need to," Jason mumbles, but reaches for it anyway. "Already dying."

"Baby."

Only when the seatbelt has clicked does Dick maneuver them out from the alley and onto the open streets heading downtown. It's mostly quiet as they leave The Bowery, except for Jason's labored breathing and occasional grunt. He *isn't* dying, that would be a gross overstatement, but he for sure isn't *fine* either, judging by the way he's tipped his head back and closed his eyes. Also, the general paleness of his skin is bordering on 'ghastly' a far cry from his usual tan, which is... worrying. Either the wound is deeper than Dick initially thought, but that would mean Jason shouldn't even be able to walk. Or something is stumping the healing process.

When they finally hit the boulevard Dick taps the screen on the dashboard and pulls up his contacts.

"Hold up –" Beside him Jason shuffles, apparently having decided to rejoin the world of the living. "Why are you calling your scary aunt?" He sounds a little nervous.

Dick likes that.

"Alibi."

"Hello Dickie. To what do I –" The phone picks up exactly as Jason hisses his name and Kate stops mid-greeting. It's quiet for a very long time in which Jason only seems to get paler. Then, "was that Jason fucking Todd I just heard?"

"Kate," Dick says. "I need your help."

“As always you have come to the right place. There are plenty of space for a body to decompose in my gardenias.”

Dick snorts. “Nope, no murdering the stupid alpha yet, sorry to disappoint.”

“Yet,” Jason repeats.

Kate doesn’t seem to find the situation very funny. “Why are you with him, Richard?”

Oh, the full name. Scary. “Remember how he’s been shot?”

“By an incompetent idiot yes, seeing as he’s still alive.”

“Well, he hasn’t been to a doctor yet, so he might just manage to do it himself,” Dick sighs, hitting the gas and speeding past another car. Jason huffs, but wisely keeps his next words too low for Dick to hear.

Kate curses. “No, Dick. Absolutely not.”

“Please Kate. I—listen, he’s been lumbering around like an idiot for what? A week? He’s absolutely useless, you should see him,” Jason growls at this, but shuts right up when Dick turns a glare on him, “and I need his help with the Joker thing.”

Kate’s quiet, but Jason rights himself. “What Joker thing?” He asks, and suddenly it’s not *Jay* beside him anymore—grumbling, crude and wicked alpha. Instead, Hood looks at him, flinty expression spelling murder.

“Fine,” Kate huffs, ignoring him. “I’ll come stich the bitch up. But I’m not gonna be nice about it.”

“Thank you so much, you’re officially my favorite aunt of the month. We’ll be at the apartment in Blud in twenty.”

She hangs up with an annoyed little sound, and Dick raises a hand to shut Jason up before he starts demanding answers.

“Joker’s trying to take over the world,” he says. Waiting to fill Jason in won’t be an option, not anymore. There’s been bad blood between him and Joker from the get-go.

Once, when Jason was younger, a bare runt trying to survive the streets, Joker grabbed him for some fucked up entertainment at his club and beat Jason to the edge of his life. When Dick found out about this he got as far as Joker's front door—crowbar in hand—before Jason caught up with him and talked him down.

“Or, well, *Gotham*, but he's buddies it with some drug-lord who's got his eyes set on Metropolis.”

Jason just stares at him for a good amount of time before he falls back into his seat. “I hate that fuckin' clown. Why's Metropolis a problem, though? I mean, Clark ain't just gonna let some nameless idiot come push him off the throne.”

Reopening the contact list Dick presses another name. “You just lost two men to K, right?”

“What of it?”

Tim's taking longer to pick up than Kate, probably because his phone is buried under a mountain of papers and gadgets. Or Conner's confiscated it. Dick turns to Jason.

“Joker is making Kryptonite bullets.”

It should be funny how deep, furious exasperation twists Jason's face into a complicated grimace, but really, this isn't a laughing matter.

“Are you *kidding* me –“ he snarls, and Dick looks away again. Savagery has always made his alpha look ethereal. “Does he never fucking *stop*?”

“We're talking about Joker here, what do you –“

“Dick!” Tim suddenly yells, and Jason has to catch a hold of the wheel when Dick swerves to the right in surprise. “Don't tell me where you're going! Dami is—*stop that you menace!*”

“Oh goodie,” Dick whispers, wafting Jason away. “He knows.”

“Who?” Jason whispers back.

Then Damian's voice slithers over the line, low and dangerous. “Tell me where you are Richard.”

His full name, twice in one day? This will go down in history.

Grounding his molars, Dick takes a deep, big-brother breath of endless patience before replying. "Don't even *try* using that alpha shit on me Damian Wayne," he huffs. "This isn't 1857. What I do isn't your decision."

"No, but cutting Todd's cheating dick off is."

"Damian –"

"No, Dick, shut up for once! That piece of shit broke your heart, he made you move away from *me*. I'll fucking *kill him*," Damian's voice breaks on the last word, although he makes a great attempt at saving the slip as a cough.

Dick's hands clench on the steering wheel, all anger fizzling away like smoke. Jason's scent spikes as sadness and shame turn it thick, so Dick avoids looking at him altogether.

"No, Dami," he says softly. "It was my own choice to move, you know that. Sweetheart, listen. I'm gonna need Jason's help for this case, he knows Joker like we can't. When it's all done, you and I will talk, okay?"

In all honesty Dick should have done this a lot sooner. He knows how much his absence has pained Damian. He'd simply been too caught up in his own hurt to be the good, older brother he was supposed to, and now it all culminates with the reappearance of Jason in their lives. However fleeting it may be. Damian doesn't say anything but he must have left, because Tim's at the phone again with a heavy exhale.

"God above. He had a katana to my throat, Dick. My *throat*."

Losing a rough laugh Dick shifts lane with trembling hands, the exit for Bludhaven coming up. "Why didn't Conner chase him away?"

"Well, as you may have deduced already, Jason's presence in your car has been leaked by a certain, angry aunt and, uh. I kind of had to put Con in time-out. Went all alpha-protective over you." Another draft of whiskey smoke, this one a little annoyed, and Dick tries not to punch Jason in the shoulder. Like he has any right to be jealous.

Then a dreadful realization hits Dick.

“Bruce?” He whispers.

It goes very, *very* quiet in the car.

“Doesn’t know a thing,” Tim quickly says. “He’s working at the office tonight.”

“Thank God,” Dick breathes. If Bruce was made aware of his current partner, Dick isn’t so sure he’ll be able to hold him back. With the appearance of the K-bullets, their old man has been pushed to the edge, turning increasingly aggravated. Yesterday he yelled at the dogs for dragging mud onto the carpet, and Dick’s pretty sure Bruce doesn’t even know they *have* carpets most of the time.

“Couldn’t have said it better myself. Anyways, Todd’s helping with the case?” Tim’s voice has gone cool, and when Jason shifts Dick finally chances a glance at him. He’s turned to face the window, so Dick only gets the vague impression of careful blankness through the glass. “I assume you want me to send the intel?”

“Basically,” Dick confirms, returning his attention to the road.

There’s a pause where all he can hear is the quick tapping of a keyboard, a few clicks of a mouse and then the squeak of Tim leaning back in his office-chair. “There. Should be on his phone now.”

Dick turns to Jason who throws a quick look at his phone before nodding. Then he goes back to glaring at his own reflection.

Welp.

“Thank you, Timmie.” Dick smiles. “Go let your ridiculous alpha out of his cage. And give him my thanks for caring so much.”

“I will. Although. Caring is really the bare minimum. Some alphas don’t need to be told that.”

The line disconnects tapering into silence, and Jason glares at his reflection without a word.

Bludhaven is exactly as Dick left it. A little smelly and broken on the outside; ritzy and glamouring the further you get in.

His penthouse is found at the heart of the city, in the tallest skyscraper available so Dick has somewhere to defeat gravity. He bought it some ten years ago with the fortune he made on dancing and performing, but he hasn't been back since bailing on Jason.

There's an underground garage and a spot reserved solely for Dick, so they don't need to waste time finding one. Instead, he throws the car into place, killing the engine and reaches for the thick woolen jacket on the backseat. It's dark green and long and begs for attention. When paired with the all-black and tight combat fit underneath, it effectively spares him the time of a complete outfit change.

He gives Jason a critical scan after they've exited the car but deems him properly covert, despite the grunting and general whining. Sure, he looks sick, but the faded jeans and long-sleeved Henley doesn't scream *hello, I'm a man of shady activities*. Besides it's too late for any stragglers to be around in this kind of neighborhood. Here good people go to bed at eleven.

Dick tilts his head. "How are we doing?"

"Great," Jason grunts. "I've always wondered what it'd feel like to walk the green mile."

"Please. This isn't an execution. I would bring Damian for that." Dick turns on his heel to head for the elevator. "Come on Sharpay Evans, the devil waits for no one."

Being stuffed in a tiny room with your hurt alpha—whom you've got some valid second-thoughts about soothing—is simply awful. There are thirty floors from the garage to Dick's penthouse which means thirty floors of smelling Jason's clear distress and not knowing what to do about it. On one hand it's nice to know there's some decency behind that rough exterior, but then again that's never been a question. It simply didn't stop Jason from being a heartless bastard.

"You stink," he eventually grouses, somewhere around the fifteenth floor and the edge of his sanity.

Jason nods, slumped against the mirror, eyes closed. “Worse than the Bowery.”

He will not smile. He will *not*. “It doesn’t make any sense. You seemed fine at the *Smoke*. And in the alley. Why are you suddenly playing grandpa on stilts?”

“Christ –“ Jason opens his eyes, pinning him with a *Look*. “Dickie, come on. I know I’m a jerk and the worst kind of scum, but I’m not so bad I won’t get affected by my—the hurt omega who’s been overflowing with distress since the Bowery. My body’s not been in the most pristine condition as of late.”

A niggling worry makes Dick tense. “But... you can’t.” It sounds like an accusation, and maybe it is. Jason raises a single eyebrow. “I’m wearing Tim’s blockers. Even a mate shouldn’t be able to sniff me out!”

For someone who looks close to collapsing, Jason certainly takes the news in stride. “How do you think I noticed you at the club? You’re too good at blending for body language to have done you in.”

“You smelled me?” Dick whispers.

Jason’s eyes go dark, and he looks away, teeth grinding. “Just a whiff. More than enough, though. Look, don’t worry about it. The one’s you’re wearing probably just need to be switched. ”

The elevator dings and Jason walks out as soon as the doors slide open, intended location clearly not forgotten even after all this time. Dick stares after him, heart in his throat.

“I switch them every day,” he whispers to no one.

Dick and Jason met like everyone in the criminal underbelly of Gotham usually meets; with a gun pointed at each other’s faces.

The Red Hood tilts his head.

“Well fuck me. If it isn’t Nightwing. Was wonderin’ when we’d bump into each other.”

The helmet must have some kind of modulator because Dick can’t make out any discerning features in his opponent’s voice. Not that it matters.

He grins, fiddling with the trigger. “Funny, me too. I’ve been curious about the nut-job cosplaying a strawberry. It’s an interesting fashion choice, I’ll give you that.”

“Strawberry? Ouch, baby. That hurts, coming from a man pretending he’s a pigeon.”

Unable to help himself Dick snorts. “You’re cute. Wanna tell me what you’re up to in Blud?”

Presumably he hasn’t done anything more than scare a few civilians but it’s better to make sure.

Hood shrugs. “Meh. Just loitering around ya’ know. Heard the Bat’s top enforcer likes to play here.”

“Liar, liar pants on fire,” Dick sings, tightening his grip on the gun. No one fucking loiters anywhere close to Gotham. They plan. “If you take off the strawberry and you’re hot enough, I might not shoot you.”

“Really? How gracious.” And just like that the lunatic pockets his gun carelessly in his belt, reaches up and pulls off the helmet.

Dick thought he had his gay awakening at fourteen but oh my god, how wrong he’s been. The awakening is now, and its green eyes and the prettiest, most wicked face Dick has ever had the pleasure of laying his eyes upon. Because of the mask Dick’s wearing there isn’t even a hint of pheromones, but the Red Hood screams alpha right from that savage grin to his continuously holstered gun.

Also, Dick’s seen him before, on TV screens and in magazines. Jason Todd is a promising entrepreneur, owner of an ever-growing mechanic’s business and currently in the talks of partnership with Wayne Enterprises.

Bruce is gonna kill him.

“Ugh,” Dick groans, slipping the gun back into its holster because he’s

neither an idiot nor an alpha. "Fine." Pulling off the hood and the mask in one go he sends Todd his most salacious wink. "Nice to meet you, Jay. Daddy's been telling me real good things about you."

Momentary surprise flickers across Jason's face, but it's replaced by dark appreciation quick enough.

"Has he now? Then it must've simply slipped Mr. Wayne's mind to tell me about his beautiful son. And your nightly activities."

"I do crime in the light of day too," Dick shrugs, covertly trying to get a whiff of Jason, but either he's too far away or he's wearing scent blockers, because Dick doesn't get anything. "Tell me, why should I believe you didn't already know about the extended family business?" He smiles, all teeth. "Seems a little too good to be a coincidence."

But Jason holds up his hands, mirth making way for sincerity.

"Honestly, didn't have a clue. Word has it Nightwing's in a pinch with Joker and I hate that fucking clown, so I thought I'd offer a hand. Also, and don't take this the wrong way, but if I wanted to bring down the Bats, I'd start with the tiny one. Not the enforcer with almost a decade on his back."

Dick throws his head back in laughter. "Please. The tiny one could kill you with a spoon."

Snickering he returns his attention to Jason, sliding a step closer. Jason doesn't even blink, keeping still and lax and Dick takes another step.

"So, you wanna do business with me?"

"Please," Jason croons, as laughter melts back onto his face. Another step has Dick less than three feet away and he finally gets a lungful of scent.

Dirty whiskey on the rocks, sipped in the darkest corners of a club with a mewling omega in his lap. Liquid smoke slides into Dick's throat, dropping to his gut and tighten. It's so typically alpha to forego the scent-blockers, and usually the empty-headed arrogance would annoy him to no end—but damn if it doesn't suit Todd.

He bites his cheek in a brave attempt to keep himself in check.

We don't do other families, he sternly reminds himself yet flashes Jason

his biggest smile.

“Well then, let’s talk business.”

Chapter End Notes

okay this chapter is shorter than the others, which is the reason for the early update--not that I have a schedule lol, but I was PLANNING on this being a weekly thing--so there'll probably be another update in a couple days

also why is Dick's entire personality jackets?

wrapped in crossed wires

Chapter Notes

!!Warning!! Semi-graphic description of use of needles for medical and safe reasons

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It's hilarious how Jason pauses in front of Dick's apartment, waiting for him to catch up so he can go in first. Kate certainly knows how to build a reputation. In reality she's all cuddly mother hen and wicked trivia skills, but Jason doesn't need to know that.

"Don't worry big boy, I'll make sure she doesn't gut you," Dick whispers and pushes the door open.

Inside it smells like dust, abandonment and his aunt's roses.

Dick stops for a moment, arrested by the sight of what was once his home. The manor is family. Old stones and memories and love.

The apartment is freedom.

Dick's fucked around here, dipped into endless wanton desires. He's danced in an oversized t-shirt at shit o'clock, munching cereal and drinking wine. He's cooked in the kitchen for Bruce and Tim and Alfred and Dami, and later *with* Jason. They've shared books here, played videogames together. There have been tears and laughter and anger, and all of it has been covered by white duvets collecting dust.

He swallows past the pained lump in his throat, moving out of the way to let Jason in.

Kate looks up from her phone at the sound of the door, feet forsaking their careless dangle off the kitchen counter. She immediately locks eyes on Jason, nostrils flaring.

"Damn, Todd. Should've just told me. Clearly, I didn't need to bring the whole shebang."

Rolling her eyes she jumps down, opening a leather bag and pulls out a syringe, disinfection wipes and some gauze dressing. Then she points at the duvet-covered sofa. "Sit."

Jason quietly obeys, avoiding Dick's searching gaze.

Tell Kate what?

Shuffling after them, Dick positions himself on the other end of the couch, keeping a sharp eye on Kate as she settles on the coffee table in front of Jason.

"Shirt off."

Again the wordless obedience. Jason's face is blank, totally devoid of any and all emotions as he pulls off the Henley, revealing a strong waist and muscles exactly as Dick remembers them. All the dips and nooks and shadows, the way they move and flex. He can even remember how they feel under his hands, and he has to swallow. Even after all this time—after all Dick has done to forget—it simply comes back. Like it was never even gone.

Yeah, he remembers it all—except for the part where a bullet has clearly grazed Jason's right side, and the litany of new, badly healed scars peppering golden skin.

Kate whistles low, frown on her face.

"Didn't know it could affect someone this bad. I almost feel sorry for you." She grabs the disinfection wipes, turning her attention on the shallow but unhealed cut on Jason's flank.

A crack of something finally shows on Jason's face but he looks away before Dick can identify it. The muscles in his neck work as Kate puts the wipe to the wound, gentle despite the angry tang to her scent. Omegas have always reacted more fiercely than an alpha ever would when one of their own has been hurt, but Kate's a doctor first and foremost.

Dick stares at the wound. It's small and close to the ribs, though still at the meaty part of Jason's torso. No doubt it's bled so much Damian's miscalculated the impact point during the following chaos. But it's been a week. And it still looks open and angry.

Kate is quiet and effective as she works. Quick to wipe down the abused area she immediately goes in with the syringe and despite various threats, Jason doesn't even flinch as she sinks the needle into

his skin.

“This is supposed to work against the mate-stress,” she says, sudden and even, despite how it settles around Dick’s throat with an iron grip.

Mate-stress.

His eyes cut to Jason who very clearly isn’t interested in looking at Dick. *At all.*

“Of fucking course,” Dick hisses, grinding his teeth, and tries not to imagine how good it would feel to punch the bastard between his fucking eyes. Leave it to Jason to sabotage himself to the point of death and bring at least five people down with him. A mating bond takes a long time to die out, and Dick’s heard rumors that if one end is upheld the other party is affected too. He just didn’t think it was true.

Kate slaps the gauze dressing on with little finesse and tapes it secure, but even this Jason takes in stride. “While I would like to leave you in your merited soup of self-inflicted pain and misery, I am a doctor. So, next time you get shot or impaled or otherwise attempted murdered, go to a damned hospital and get another shot. We can only hope the stress is gonna be a forever-kind of thing, but right now it’s certainly looking up.”

“Kate,” Dick warns, because while he too would like to tear Jason a new one, that isn’t happening tonight. Joker and the job take priority.

But Jason overtakes him.

“Sure,” he says, eyes pinned somewhere on the opposite wall. It looks like everything still hurts. “Thanks doc.”

Kate snorts, getting to her feet.

“Not doing this for you, shithole. Dick –“ She turns, giving him a quick once-over. “Bruce wants to know if you’re coming home for breakfast.”

“Plan to, might be a little late though,” he inclines his head towards their reluctant patient who’s slowly crawling back into his shirt. Which is definitely for the best. Jason might be a bastard, but he’s not gotten any less hot, and Dick is only a man. “Gotta get Big And Scary there home.”

Kate grumbles something too low to hear, but gets up with a defeated little sigh. “You’re an annoying little masochist, Dick.”

“If only you knew.”

She glares at him, grabbing her bag. “How much for not telling Bruce about this? Or the demon spawn?” At ‘this’ she gestures between Dick and Jason—who tenses *again* at the mention of Bruce.

But Dick just rolls his eyes and gets up to hold the door for her because he’s a gentleman and Kate’s scary.

“You won’t. No one wants to see that particular shit-show. Not even me.”

Instead of answering she clicks her tongue, flipping him off as she stalks to the elevator. Dick locks the door for good measure. Not that Damian doesn’t know how to scale a building, but at least Dick’s making an attempt to keep him out.

“I don’t think my life has been threatened this many times since Joker made me his plaything for a week.”

Jason says it with his usual dry humor laced into every vowel, but Dick’s heart still clenches. No matter what this man has done, the reminder of what he had to survive at the age of *fourteen* is fuel to a fire of burning fury. Jason’s always liked to joke with it, but honestly, it’s never been anywhere close to funny. Dick really isn’t one for killing, yet the urge is resurrected like a fallen angel every time he hears the story. A dark guardian who would gladly stain his white feathers if it means getting that kid an inkling of justice.

He turns, tight draw to his mouth and Jason’s eyes softens.

“Oh, no. Dickie –“ he laughs humorlessly. “Don’t. Not for me.”

“That’s not for you to decide,” Dick whispers back, but does his best to kill the storm on his face anyway. Instead, he sweeps a critical look over Jason.

Kate has done wonders, there’s already a little color back in his skin and the big lump’s not exactly sagging anymore, which is a major improvement from the pathetic show he put on not half an hour ago.

Still. He looks nowhere close to being able to take on Joker.

“Mating stress?” Dick raises a brow. “Why not just find any good omega to get rid of that?”

Jason pales and promptly looks away. “You don’t wanna know.”

“It doesn’t work, does it?”

He figured. For some reason he’s weirdly okay with it. Maybe even a bit relieved, but that’s not a feeling he’s gonna linger on. Probably just petty bitterness anyway.

“... no.”

Dick closes his eyes. There’s a very easy answer to all of this.

Do it for the case, Grayson. I don’t want Joker’s pale ass sitting on Gotham.

Before he can think too much on it and chicken out, Dick pushes away from the door, walks over and plops down beside Jason, who’s following him with wary eyes.

Then Dick extends a hand

“What?” Jason says, staring at it like it’s contaminated, which is rude.

Dick sighs. “Take my hand.”

“Why?”

“Because you clearly need some good ol’ omega pheromones to get better. I’m not dragging your sorry ass out to beat up Joker in its current condition. Cleaning up after your inevitable and brutal death will be too much effort. Now take my fucking hand.”

“Yeah, except you don’t want to,” Jason points out, lips thinning. “Besides, a mate’s scent only helps if they don’t... hate you. That much I know, at least.”

Oh fuckity fuck, the bitch had to go there, didn’t he?

Dick glares silently at him for a while, willing him to understand, but Jason simply returns the look with a stubborn little frown.

“Fuck you,” Dick hisses when it’s clear the bastard’s not gonna clock it. “I don’t hate you. Think I would be this angry and bitter and move hundreds of miles away if that was the case? Nuh-uh hot shot, your body would’ve been rotting in a sewer for years now if it was that simple. So, take. My. Hand!”

There’s something not far from shock on Jason’s face—which is at least a little nice—but he also seems to have gone into a state of numb suspension because his hands remain limp in his lap. Why does Dick always have to do everything?

With a snarl and his heart in his throat he reaches out and grabs one of Jason’s big, rough hands with his own, sliding their fingers together and pulls it into his own lap. Pheromones are the most potent near the neck or between the legs—because of reasons obvious and redundant to explain—and Dick isn’t gonna let Jason that close to the half-gone mating bite on his nape. It’s already itching as it is, no need to make matters worse.

The move finally seems to pull Jason out of the reverie he’s fallen into, because his scent skyrockets before falling into something low and deeply satisfied, and his face goes slack. Dick—who’s having a lot of trouble keeping in the soothing fumes meant to help his hurt alpha—fights hard against the instinct to preen at that. It’s ridiculous.

I made alpha happy, he’s okay.

Yeah fuck that shit.

“Jesus Christ, Dickie,” Jason rasps, hand tightening around Dick’s like he just can’t help it. His body makes an aborted attempt to get closer. “Please threaten to kill me again, or I’ll be holding more than your hand in a second.”

A sharp inhale and his mouth and nose are mercilessly filled with their mixed scents. Dick’s entire body constricts like a bowstring on the verge of release. He has to bite his cheek so hard it draws blood. “I’ll do more than fucking kill you,” he hisses, more to himself than to Jason honestly, tightening the grip on his hand, “I’ll damn-well castrate you!”

But instead of looking any kind of troubled Jason just fucking *laughs*. All breathless and open-faced and beautiful, a familiar glint of wicked

mirth settling in his eyes and suddenly there aren't years of hurt between them anymore.

They're dancing in the clubs again, Jason's hands everywhere on him. They're watching the stars on a rooftop on a rare cloudless night. They're dirtying the streets and the sheets and Jason's making him breakfast after. They're watching tv-shows, wondering where to go for the upcoming holidays because they're a team now and they're not gonna split up.

"That's not helping at all, now I'm just—Dick?"

And fuck all that because now he's on the verge of crying, eyes stinging and face pulled into a painful grimace to keep it at bay.

Jason curses, blinking rapidly. "Shit, sorry I didn't mean to—" he opens and closes his mouth a few times, probably attempting to find something to say, anything to divert the situation back into safer waters than his trashed omega crying. "Okay, fuck. Yeah. So, Joker the little shit? K-bullets and world-domination, tell me about it."

It's so stupid it actually helps. Dick snorts a laugh, squeezing his eyes shut for a few, hard seconds before bringing himself back onto the couch, into reality.

"Okay," he whispers and wills the pain away. "You read what Tim sent?"

Jason sags. "Yeah."

"We don't know much yet, except that the K-bullets are meant to take Clark down. They definitely have a plan on how to do that, and it definitely involves scaring the living crap out of him, we just don't know how. Also, Bruce."

"Joker wants Gotham. Means he must have a plan for Bats." Jason nods, thinking face up and running. "Could be the K-bullets too and the element of surprise. Assuming Joker doesn't know you're on his ass yet."

"He shouldn't. I snagged a couple of bullets the other night, back when we met in the alley, but they haven't reacted to that, not yet at least. I just don't think Joker's gonna put his faith entirely into some bullets."

Dick frowns. Judging Joker's handling of them they're definitely a part of the scheme, but they won't install the same fear in Bruce as they will Clark. "If only we knew who the drug-dealer is, we might be able to connect some dots."

"I have a theory on that, actually."

"Oh?"

"So, I just got shot, right?"

"Right," Dick says dryly, with a pointed look to their clasped hands, but Jason simply continues, not at all chastised.

"Did you know it was one of Scarecrow's goons that got me?"

"Tim did mention something about that, yes."

"Well, the reason we were in that storehouse to begin with, was because we'd gotten word that Crow's cooking K."

Dick's licks his lips, mind turning. "How convenient."

"Not back then it wasn't," Jason grunts. "We showed up and instead of drugs there was an army waiting for us. Until now I've just been assuming it was a one-shot attempt at murking me, but –"

Dick nods slowly and says, "in the face of the latest evidence, not so much. But why now? Sure, Hood's the Bat's biggest ally in the city, taking you down would definitely shake us, it just doesn't explain what's prompted it."

... or maybe there is an explanation and Dick just doesn't know it. That certainly seems to be the case with the way Jason deflates a little, back to avoiding eye-contact. Pressing his lips together, Dick clenches his hand around Jason's.

"Tell me," he demands, sour betrayal already seeping into his voice. This shit stinks of his family keeping secrets.

Jason briefly closes his eyes. "They said you were busy Dickie, some up and coming performance you were super excited about, that's the only reason –"

“Spit it out or I’m gonna seriously reconsider not castrating you.” And maybe Bruce, depending on what Dick’s about to be told.

Jason rakes his free hand down his face. “There’s a meeting about a possible expansion of the weapon’s trade to Starling in a week. We’re supposed to meet with Arrow at the docks.”

Yep, that one hurts.

And *fine*, yes there was that performance he was genuinely looking forward to, which got cancelled anyway and Dick’s been away, chose so himself, but Bruce has been adamant on keeping him in the loop. *Promised* him that Dick could still act as enforcer. That the over-protective bastard has decided not to include him in this, isn’t so much a surprise, but fuck if it doesn’t hurt.

Jason is looking at him, seemingly calm, but Dick can smell the uptick in soothing pheromones. He decides not to comment on it because maybe (just maybe) it isn’t such a bad idea at the moment. He knows where Bruce is and he’s *definitely* pissed enough to show up and smack the bastard upside his stupid head.

Fortunately—or unfortunately, depending on the mindset—this gives them a pretty clear picture on where to start.

“They want to take you out of the equation and leave Bruce to fend for himself at the meeting,” Dick whispers, trying not to sound like he’s two seconds away from patricide.

Jason nods tightly.

It could work. Arrow isn’t an enemy, but he’s not an ally either. The boss of Starling City has reminded them of that particular attitude on more than one occasion. If Joker and (maybe) Scarecrow were to attack during the meeting at the docks without Jason there to even the odds, Bruce might very well be mincemeat.

“I wonder where they found out about the meeting-point though,” Jason says. His thumb brushes down the back of Dick’s hand.

“It’s at the fucking docks, Jay,” Dick grumbles, trying not to like the caress too much. This is reaching staggering levels of pathetic. “Everybody meets at the docks.”

“Which is why we chose it. The Bat would be too smart to pick a spot

that obvious. Do you guys write shit like this into Wayne's calendar? Maybe he's been hacked."

Dick rolls his eyes. "Don't be an idiot, no one's getting through the Bat's cyber security. We have Tim."

Jason scowls at the insult. "I know that. What I'm saying is that *Bruce Wayne's* computer can't be as well defended, that would raise suspicion."

Turning, Dick levels him with a frown. "What do you mean?"

Jason stares back. "What do you mean, *what?* Daddy's a busy celebrity, of course he has a calendar," he says slowly, like Dick's being thick. "*You're* a celebrity Dick. Actually, there's just been this nice little article of you, telling some reporter how good the alphas of Opal City treat –"

Dick cuts off his grumbling summary of the interview. "Yes, I'm aware. But why would Joker know to look at Bruce Wayne's schedule, even if the meeting had been noted there? Which it *hasn't* been, I can promise you that much. Uninvited or not."

Now Jason really looks like Dick has lost his marbles. "Because he's the Batman? We just fucking established that Joker wants the Gotham throne."

"Well yeah." Dick scoffs, increasingly annoyed. "But for him to even give it a shot he would have to know of B's cowled crusade."

Jason blinks, clearly confused.

And that's when it finally hits Dick. He blinks at Jason. "You think Joker knows who Batman is?"

"He... doesn't?" God, Jason sounds so flabbergasted Dick can't be annoyed with him anymore. Shaking his head he watches quietly as Jason pales, something awful taking over his features.

"Jason, why did you think he did?"

There's something in the air, something fragile and a little dangerous. Like the short moment between pulling the trigger and impact.

“He told me,” Jason eventually mumbles, eyes hazy like his mind is far away. “About five years ago, he... he said he knew *the dark cowl’s* identity.”

Dick nods slowly. “Yeah, he’d just figured out who Midnighter was.”

That’d been a shit-show unlike any other. Apollo and his husband ended up going underground for an entire year, while Bruce helped sort out that mess. The worst part was that the entire debacle ended up being resolved by granting Joker a simple lunch-date with Batman—which even turned out quite nice. Bruce came home with a tiny smile and a bouquet of knives and flowers. Dick’s pretty sure they’re dried and exhibited somewhere in the manor.

When Jason keeps looking like a man gutted, Dick taps his shoulder to get his attention.

“Joker doesn’t want to know who Batman is,” he says softly, because it seems like Jason’s a second away from imploding. “I’m pretty sure he doesn’t even understand there’s a man behind the mask. You have to understand, he’s *obsessed* with the Batman. There exists no one else for him; Batman is his life and his doom. His everything.”

When Jason still doesn’t say anything, Dick pulls at their hands, his turn to brush a thumb across hot skin. “Jay, what –“

But for some reason Jason seems to pull himself together at the sound of Dick’s voice. He blinks, shakes his head, and sends him a tight smile.

“Sorry, spaced out for a bit there. I’m okay. Anyway, the means of how they acquired the meeting-place are mostly irrelevant –“

Dick frowns as Jason blabbers on, only listening with half an ear. No, it’s not that important. If there is a mole it’s better to wait until the meeting to sniff them out, which is possible with Jason healing much faster than before. It’s just... his reaction to the whole *Joker doesn’t know who Batman is and doesn’t give a flying fuck* thing is *weird*. And that’s putting it nicely. Bruce is capable of handling himself, and Jason never told them about the apparent unmasking of Batman, which means he just assumed, they already knew. All in all, it’s not a problem large enough to concern Jason, yet here he is, looking like a man close to crying.

Not to mention his scent. He smells like a college student during exam-season.

“—so the drug dealer is most likely Scarecrow.”

“Yeah,” Dick mumbles, tuning back in. “We’re gonna have to prove it though.”

“Which a quick visit to his turf will do for us,” Jason shrugs, bravado almost chasing away the smaller signs of distress. Almost. There’s still the downturned mouth, a rigid back, the occasional twitching of a leg. And his fucking scent.

Dick’s about to drown in it.

Some few minutes ago he realized he’s moved closer, their thighs and arms now aligning. Jason has also brought their joined hands onto his own thigh, that thumb back at caressing. For some reason Dick can’t make himself move away again despite numerous tries where he’s been reminding himself exactly what, and who, Jason did.

“I’ll ask Cass. She always talks about how lacking Scarecrow’s security is.” Or well, she raises some very unimpressed eyebrows and goes out only to come back half an hour later. She might as well scream in hysterical laughter. “And we should probably tell Bruce too.”

Dick blows an annoyed sound, not looking forward to that particular confrontation at all. Bruce is in a mood, *Dick’s* in a mood—which in other words mean that disaster is only waiting to happen.

Jason makes a weird sound, but when Dick turns to look, his face is suspiciously impassive.

“What?” Dick demands, not liking the look.

“Nothing.”

“You’re lying.”

“Am not.”

“Then why do you sound like a five-year-old?”

“Do *not*!”

Dick tilts his head and Jason blushes.

“Shaddup,” he grumbles. “Nothing’s wrong, don’t worry ‘bout it Dickie. I should—well. I should probably get going. It’s late.” Jason tilts his chin to the dawning light outside, and it’s only then Dick realizes they’ve been talking the sun up.

Suddenly it isn’t so difficult extracting himself from Jason, reality a nice cold bucket of *are you fucking stupid? He cheated on you, repeatedly and very consciously*. Dick drops the big hand in his own and stands up, avoiding the crestfallen look on Jason’s face, he doesn’t quite manage to kill fast enough.

The sudden lack of warmth and skin and alpha is almost physically painful, so Dick busies himself with gathering his jacket and phone. There are at least ten missed calls from Bruce, which means he must’ve been briefed on their not-so-new associate. Sighing, he pockets it, daring a glance at Jason. Luckily it seems he’s gotten a hold of the *Unbothered and Too Cool for You* look again.

“So, I’m gonna talk to Bruce,” Dick starts, following Jason with his eyes as he moves towards the door, “tell him what we’ve figured out, and when Cass has done a little breaking and entering, I’ll let you know if Scarecrow’s our guy. Then we should be able to hatch a plan for the weapons meeting.”

Jason nods, coming to a stop in front of the door. “Sounds good.”

It’s quiet for a beat as they just stare at each other. They do that too much, Dick thinks, but there’s nothing to say. No words can mend what’s been dropped between them, no words can ever bring Dick close to forgiving. And he’s not so sure Jason even wants it anymore.

At least he looks better. The slump is gone and he’s strong on his feet again, there’s color on his face and a fire in his eyes, which means the practical cuddle-session they’ve just ended haven’t been entirely superfluous and embarrassing.

Eventually Jason drops his gaze, hand coming to rest on the doorknob. “Thanks. And sorry.” He scratches the back of his neck. “Know this isn’t exactly how you wanted to spend your evening.”

“Duty and pleasure have never been equals,” Dick simply mutters.

“Listen, Jason. Maybe avoid Bruce for a few days? Just if you see him and all. I’m about to go yell at him, and he’s already strung up about the K-bullets and Clark.” He sighs, rubbing a hand across his face. This is such a mess. “On top of the whole me-and-you situation he’s not the best company to keep. I don’t think he’s quite over being an angry dad with a shotgun yet, and I need you operative –“

“What,” Jason interrupts him, voice strained, “me-and-you situation?”

His eyes are wide and... frightened? Jason’s afraid. Seriously, genuinely terrified, and then his scent hits Dick which is just ten times worse.

“What? Already forgot about the part where we were bonded before you cheated on me with half of Gotham?” Dick asks, voice made cold by growing anger. If Jason Todd’s gonna stand there and pretend there never even was a *them*, Dick’s not sure what he’s gonna do, but it won’t be pretty. “Just fuck off Jason, before I decide your help isn’t needed after all.”

“No that’s not –“ Jason whispers, shaking his head. God, he looks like he’s seen a ghost. “You said... you said Bruce *knows*. About us?” The last part is barely audible, and Dick has to strain his ears to hear.

“Well yeah, you think I didn’t tell him what you did? We were bonded, and he’d just landed a free evening for dinner, I—damn Jason, how arrogant can you be –“

But Jason interrupts him again with a deep, wounded noise from the back of his throat that’s more animal than human. His scent drops low, heavy with... something. Something Dick can’t name but has definitely smelled before, and it absolutely floors him. His omega cries out as he moves towards Jason, but he’s already tumbling out of the door.

It closes quietly after him, so at odds with the gravity of the situation. The following silence echoes between the walls.

“What?” Dick whispers, blinking at the closed door.

It's dark in the cave when Dick drags himself home an hour later.

The others are probably surrounding the breakfast table by now, but all he wants to do is go to bed.

To say it's been a long night would be an understatement. A long, tedious, and noisy night more like, so the relative quiet of the cave's trickling water and occasional flapping of a bat here and there is a welcome distraction from his overactive mind. He can't let go of the look on Jason's face right before he bolted. It feels like Dick's missing something, though honestly, there's not much to ponder

He knows about us?

Jason thought Dick didn't tell Bruce what he did, which is preposterous and infuriating in so many ways, but *how* he arrived at that ridiculous idea ultimately isn't worth wasting any breath on. Just... it's just that Dick feels like he's *missing* something.

There's still no name for the way Jason smelled, when Dick plops headfirst into the pillows later, breakfast forgone.

The storm rages on outside as Dick smuggles Jason through his bedroom window at the manor, but the adorable little shit just grins and looks at Dick like he's worth the entire hassle and then some.

"Am I a secret?" He whispers, wagging his eyebrows, crowding close the moment he's safe on his feet and Dick scoffs, delighted.

"Oh, definitely."

Bruce has been on the edge lately, because Clark is having a hard time with Lex in Metropolis, and Bruce is an idiot. He knows about Jason, obviously, but Dick isn't gonna test an old, touchy alpha's limit.

"You're dirty business baby, dad would never approve."

Whiskey and smoke is definitely dirty, bordering on filthy, but for a

moment something bitter sharpens the edges.

Jason continues stalking forward, pushing Dick towards the bed with the delicious entirety of his oversized body, and fuck yeah, this tickles Dick's size kink like no one's business.

"Better keep quiet then, princess," Jason rasps, mouth hot and searing on his a moment later.

Exactly like predicted the so-called talk with Bruce rather quickly turns into a screaming contest (mostly Dick) and ends with such a heavy flow of pissed-off pheromones (mostly Bruce), that Alfred exiles everyone from the living room, so he can air out.

"He tossed you *out*," Bruce hisses at him.

"Yes *me*, not you! What I do with my life, who I spend my time with, is *none* of your business. I am a fucking adult B, who by the way would like to know if my boss is having a very important meeting regarding the business I'm a vital part of! And *stop* yelling!"

"I am not yelling!" Bruce yells and Dick flips him off which isn't the right de-escalation tactic at all, it turns out.

Alfred joins Dick in the flowerbed later with a cup of tea and a blanket but ultimately refuses to sit down between the bushes and winter-flowers with him.

"My trousers, Master Dick," Alfred sniffs.

"Suit you very well." Dick tries to elicit a laugh, but the joke falls flat. There's that glimmer in Alfred's eyes that says more than words ever could, so Dick lifts the cup of tea, blanket draped over his shoulders. "Thank you."

"When you and the Garden Mums are done talking," Alfred simply says. "Come find me in the kitchen. Your brothers and I are making tiramisu and those who do not make an effort will not harvest. Master Bruce has been sent to Mr. Jordan's house for some reflection."

That laugh finally finds its way out. It's a spiteful little victory, but clearly Alfred is on his side, and Bruce has been put in timeout.

"I'll be there."

A slender hand—all elegant moves and wrinkled skin—settles in his hair for a moment, before Alfred shuffles off, leaving Dick and the Garden Mums to backtalk his stupid dad.

... although it seems a little redundant now that Hal's just gonna laugh it into his face.

Chapter End Notes

Bruce: then he yelled at me!

Hal just trying to mind his own business and a day off, but somehow ends up being the big bad Batman's unwilling babysitter once again get snot on my couch and -

-- honestly you guys are wonderful (!: comments and kudos are such a great motivator and you people are so nice?!

dropping bombs

Chapter Notes

thank you so much to everyone who's commenting and liking this!! (': I'm fucking floored guys

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Life has a way of working out Dickie,” his mom tells him. “As long as you trust it.”

Her voice is soft, hands gentle as she wraps his sprained ankle, and it sounds like she’s telling the truth—but Dick is eight years old with a bruised ego and a throbbing foot, and he doesn’t really understand or care.

“Then why can’t life just do it right from the beginning?” He grumbles, thinking of the distance between one trapeze and the next, how far down the earth is, and how bad it hurts not to make the jump the first time around.

Mom laughs, patting his leg. “There is a lesson in this sweetheart. I’m sure you’ll find it in time.”

The tiramisu is delicious because Alfred’s a genius.

And when Bruce comes home an hour after the last bit of cake has been scraped from the bottom, looking properly chastised, Dick decides Hal is also a genius. His stubborn, hardheaded dad even grumbles an apology which doesn’t exactly close the wound of being left out, but at least it makes him feel seen.

Entirely unrelated to both dessert and his father Dick ends up texting Jason. He doesn’t get a reply, which doesn’t bother him at all.

Honestly.

He was just gonna make sure the asshole wasn’t running a fever again, but if Jason doesn’t want to speak with him, Dick and his pheromones

won't have to show up and commence another session of overwrought handholding.

And it's *fine*, it is. For the best probably, because clearly it takes no more than two days of exposure to his hurt alpha, mixed with a few stupid jokes, to make Dick feel lighter than he's done in a very long time—no more than two days before he manages to forget exactly where Jason's hands found themselves the last time they were supposed to be holding Dick's.

"As your friend—if we're still friends, of course—I'd say leave it," Roy sighs, the day after Jason stormed out of Dick's apartment. "He's most likely still in possession of all his limbs. Maybe. Possibly."

Dick frowns at his bedroom ceiling at the manor, phone on speaker by his head. "Why wouldn't we be friends Roy? I mean sure, we haven't exactly kept in touch but circumstances –"

"Exactly, circumstances. A proper buddy would've kicked Jay's dumb ass and left him in his own mess. I stayed."

"Not to sanctify myself here, but I would rather Jason got you than I did. There isn't a mansion filled with loving, caring family waiting for him when he's hurting. At best he'll get a bar filled with touch-starved knuckleheads high on painkillers, who'll cry if you shake their fucking hand."

"... you can't mean that."

"Don't worry, I'm embarrassed as well," Dick snorts. "But he's fine?"

God above it is *humiliating*. If Jason's sick again it's by his own doing and rather deserved at that, so Dick calling Roy when he gets no word from Jason is just. Well. It's pathetic is what it is but shit if he could stop himself from doing it. Unfortunately Roy isn't judging him because he could really use the introspection.

"No," Roy says quietly. "I don't think Jay's been okay for a while now. But he's not dead."

"Where is he?"

Pushing is an obsessive, wasteful effort of his heart that Dick has practiced to perfection. It's all he does these days; pushing Bruce,

himself. Pushing around memories and thoughts until he's physically hurting, because the more time goes, the emptier he feels. There's a space in his heart carved out like a pumpkin, doomed to rot as it has served its purpose.

"Well, that's the million-dollar question isn't it. Never came back after you kidnapped him, only left a message saying he was gonna go *hit shit*."

Dick's mouth turns down at the corners, worry raking its biting nails through his gut. "It might be my fault. He said something right before leaving, and I kinda snapped."

The other end of the line is quiet for a beat.

"Great," Roy eventually mumbles, like he doesn't want to know, but continues anyway. "How did he muck it up this time?"

Dick gives a brief summary of their last conversation before Jason stumbled off, but he only gets to the part where he had to inform Jason that, "yes, Bruce is indeed aware of what you did. I mean fuck, Roy, how much of an asshole can you be? What did he expect? Even if I hadn't told him, dad would notice. I spend all my time with Jay, we were fucking *mated*, and when he was done with me, he wasn't exactly subtle about where he put his cock. We do get magazines out here you know, it's not *that* remote –"

"Hold your horses for a bit there, Richard," Roy interrupts him, and Dick shuts up, because he sounds like he's swallowed a bag of nails, "cause I think I'm gonna have to recap the noises your mouth just made. Bruce knew you and Jay were together, which means he knows what he did?"

Either Dick is the one who's wrong in this equation or Roy's as dumb as his boss. He has to blink a few times, trying to wrap his head around how they could possibly think otherwise, but comes up with no logical explanation.

"*Duh*," he hisses, when he's gathered himself enough to be angry. "Jesus Roy, I thought you at least would be smart enough to –"

"I understand you're angry Dick, I really do, but I have to go," Roy whispers and promptly hangs up, leaving Dick alone with the piercing cry of a silent phone.

When he leaves Gotham, he takes the train. It feels very dramatic and sad, and it's been years since he last traveled with anything but a plane or car. Besides, he needs the time before touching down in Metropolis. Reality still hasn't settled with a picture where Jason doesn't take up half of it, like even the world has a hard time understanding what the fuck just happened.

So, Dick takes the train.

He's just waved his family off, claiming he needs time to board without them there looking all sad and lonely, which is true, but mostly Nightwing needs to say goodbye to Gotham and that would make Bruce frowny. Dick can't handle a frown right now.

Unfortunately, fate wants it that the mask has only just clasped behind his head, the hood pulled up and his jacket zipped, when he finds himself face to face with Joker.

Gotham's train station is old and in dire need of a makeover (which Bruce is in the process of funding) but apparently Dick's up high enough to be spotted. Coincidence has always been his friend, yet tonight, it seems like she's left the building.

"Excuse my language, Jokes," Dick whispers, Eskrima stick in hand, "but kindly fuck off before I decide to barbecue you through the ass."

"My, my, my birdie," Joker giggles. "What's got you pretty panties in a twist?"

"Honestly. You'll rotate like a roast chicken. The sticks go together, they'll be long enough. Trust me."

The smile on Joker's face is ceaseless, eyes brimming with too many and too small emotions, and he tilts his head. "Ouch. So, angry."

"Furious," Dick corrects him, voice annoyingly hoarse. "Did you come here to pick a fight?"

Joker chortles. "Nopes, Wing. Just taking a lil' stroll down Gotham's lovely

streets, didn't expect to spot a bird this late at all. Who broke your heart?"

The sudden question catches Dick off guard, and he tenses, but before he can check to see if the scent blockers he donned with the uniform is loose or off entirely, Joker's big mouth is talking again.

"Oho, don't look so shocked. You have never been furious before," he tilts his head, smile going impossibly wider.

A chill runs down Dick's spine.

Joker has always been scary, but tonight he's a little closer to terrifying. There's something... joyful, about him. And while he's always laughing or grinning or singing, he's never happy. Right now, however, it looks like he's won either a prize or some macabre lottery.

"Tell me who and I'll gift them a trophy for doing the impossible. Imagine, someone capable of killing Nightwing's smile."

Dick's Eskrima stick flies over the edge of the building as Joker ducks out of its way, and then he's over the edge as well with a piercing cry of laughter, before Dick even thinks to follow.

Despite a hammering heart and questions so big and impossible to answer they hurt his head, Dick ends up falling asleep. Of course, the six shots of straight vodka did their job, but even as they slithered through his system one after another, sleep felt more like a dream than an actual possibility, and it's only a few hours later, when Dick wakes to the sound of raised voices and the greying edge of night, that he realizes he's actually been unconscious at all.

He blinks blearily at his door, half-ajar.

"... so *typical* Bruce! Why wouldn't I be capable of handling myself?"

Is that... no. It can't be.

For a beat it's quiet, save for the murmur of a low voice that has to be Bruce. He's speaking too quietly for Dick to hear anything, even as he strains a little, slowly waking up to –

“Well *fuck* you, you constipated, emotionally senseless excuse of a –“

Dick bolts up. That *is* Clark.

And then the scent hits him. Or, well *scents* since it very quickly becomes evident that there’s a whole bunch of people downstairs and they’re all either really sad or pissed the fuck off. Luckily, he was pathetic enough to fall asleep with his clothes on, because Dick spares no thought to his state of dress as he flings himself out the door and into the darkened hallways. This confrontation doesn’t feel like a boxers-thing.

“K isn’t some boogeyman under my bed Bruce, I have a right to know, a goddamn *need* before another family calls to inform me of it!”

From the sounds of it they’re in the foyer, so Dick slows down right before hitting the stairs and tries to get control of his breathing. Thanks to high metabolism and good genes he can’t feel the vodka, but he’s groggy from sleep, and he’s pretty sure his eyes are still red from alcohol fueled angry-crying.

“Gotham is not your problem, it’s *mine*. The K hadn’t reached Metropolis, so I decided –“

“Exactly, you decided. *You* alone, like you always do, with absolutely zero regards for the hearts that are broken as a consequence.”

Dick rounds the corner and takes the first step down, at the same time Bruce’s scent goes haywire. It’s a painful mix of too many feelings at once, all familiar to Dick but entirely impossible to sort out and name.

(There’s one in particular, one he feels in his bones, one he couldn’t name on Jason, but somehow is closer to finding an answer for now)

The foyer comes into view as Damian slides in front of Bruce with an angry little sound, and ha, the sight of tiny Damian in front of Bruce’s powerful, fight primed body would be downright hilarious, if it didn’t so much look like a war zone down there.

The front doors are open, allowing the cold edge of October’s night to sweep in. It drops the temperature low enough that Dick shivers in his sweater and jeans. Alfred is hovering somewhere close to the kitchen door, but otherwise people have gathered in different camps,

clumping together around the split epicenter of the conflict.

Barry, as always, is the first to notice Dick, but he only spares him a glance before his attention is glued back to his boss, hand floating somewhere close to Clark's shoulder. Wally's there too and his eyes stick to Dick when they catch. He keeps quiet though, even as Dick dips his head in greeting.

Then he finds Roy.

What the fuck Jason's enforcer is doing here, is a big fat mystery, but he looks a little nauseous when he sees Dick. He's standing the closest to the doors, behind Clark—who whips towards Dick at the same time Bruce loses a warning growl.

His dad has probably gathered it's Dick coming, seeing as he's the only one missing. Even Conner's here, standing like a mountain between Tim and the threat at the door, staring at his estranged father like he's taking the measures for a coffin. Or imagining a noose.

That's a story even messier than Bruce and Clark's.

Alpha pheromones make the air thick and heavy, but the omegas present turn it cutting; Tim is glaring at everyone in turn, and Clark looks angry enough it wouldn't surprise Dick if he actually combusts into flames.

"No, Dick," Bruce begins, clearly stressed out of his mind with his family smack-dap in a situation where danger and anger are tangible things through the pain rolling off his abandoned omega in waves.

"Yes Dick," Dick corrects, only slightly winded. "Care to explain why you're having it out in the foyer?"

In front of the kids, he tells his father quietly, by judging eyebrows alone.

Clark's face is pulled into a mask of hurt, eyes furious. "So this is the urgent business that made you go home?"

Dick winces at the unspoken accusation behind that question. The two of them had found solace in each other's pain while Dick was in Metropolis and tentatively rebuild the father-son-relationship they once shared, before Bruce shattered it on the kitchen floor. When he

left to deal with Joker, he'd given Clark a half-assed excuse, which had been allowed because Clark most likely gathered Dick was simply returning home to check on Jason. Which he *also* did, but the conversation still tasted like a lie.

"You told him?" Bruce snarls, but that only reclaims him the full force of Clark's anger who starts yelling something about controlling asshats and *honestly*.

"Okay, just—shut up!" Dick hisses before either of them can say anything else stupid. "Of course, I told him I was leaving, what'd you expect? If I just up and vanished without a word he would've shown up a lot sooner, believe me. And yes, partially," he admits, turning to Clark. "B called and asked me to handle Joker and his crusade. It wasn't supposed to be a big thing, but then we found out he's planning to overthrow the Batman and plans were reconstructed."

"What?" Some of the anger visibly leaves Clark at that as he deflates a little, eyes flickering to Bruce.

Dick knows that look. It's the torn need to leave an alpha who doesn't want you, while simultaneously being ready to tear apart the world for him. And they're not even mated.

It's only going to get worse, though.

"Now, this next part might stoke some flames, but uh, since the truth will out and half of it has already started a minor war," Dick says slowly, grabbing Damian by the shoulder to bodily haul his little brother behind himself when the kid starts hissing at him to shut up, *do you want a bloodbath, Dick!?*

"We weren't gonna involve you, okay? And yeah, that's shitty, but it wasn't entirely B's decision since I'm in charge of the operation. Matter of fact is, you don't handle K well, Clark, and you mean something to me—a lot actually—which is why even when Metropolis got thrown into the shit pile, I –"

Clark's mouth tightens, eyes narrowing. It doesn't even take a single word to shut Dick up, his mouth snaps closed on its own at that look.

"What's that about Metropolis?"

Dick doesn't have to answer, because apparently, Tim's had enough.

“Joker’s got a business partner, and the idea seems to involve taking you and B out, so they’ll have Gotham and Metropolis to themselves,” he says, quietly caustic, chin hooked on Conner’s shoulder. At first glance it looks like cuddling, but then Dick notices the tendons in Conner’s neck and the way Tim has a hand wrapped tightly around his alpha’s wrist in clear warning to *stay*. “To make a long story short.”

Bruce is radiating distress and that fucking emotion Dick can’t put a name on beside him, body quite literally vibrating—when Clark throws his hands into the air with an angry noise, Dick chances a quick glance back at him. Icy blue is pinned on Clark, mouth partly open on mostly quiet, but harsh, breaths.

“I was gonna handle it, Clark,” Dick says seriously.

“Yeah, lovely. I feel absolutely respected, wonderful job guys!”

“Please,” Barry whispers, finally putting that hand on his boss’ shoulder. “There’s nothing more to do, maybe we should leave? Joker’s not a problem anymore, don’t let him ruin the treaty now.”

“Hold up.” Joker’s not a problem? Dick frowns. “What the fuck does that mean?”

He supposes it's impressive how Clark can make people stop talking with a single look, even Barry, his top enforcer who rarely ever loses a smile, but honestly, it’s mostly terrifying. There’s a pregnant silence growing in the room, so Dick turns to Tim who refuses to look at him. Realization comes slow, but surely. A cold clarity that has him clenching his jaw, and then a shuffle at the door draws his attention.

Roy does look guilty. It just doesn’t speak his case.

In the end it’s Bruce who says it.

“For some reason Jason decided to tell Clark about the K-bullets.” His voice is a low rumble, trembling with barely contained anger, and Roy’s face does something complicated and a little scared. “Apparently you guys were right, Scarecrow was the drug dealer. He’s currently jamming it in Arkham with Joker. Oh, yes,” an icy smile pulls his face into something notably shark-like, “and every last bit of K they produced have been eradicated, bullets and powder alike. Did I forget anything, Clark?”

“No, that’s pretty much it. Although,” Clark presses his lips together. “Joker is making a stop at the hospital first. For some reason, they’re not equipped to handle more than one broken bone in Gotham’s prison. But semantics. Your clown will shake bars sooner rather than later.”

Dick clenches his fist, angry betrayal settling in his teeth as he levels a burning glare at Roy.

“So that’s what happened after you hung up on me? Found Jay so you could tattle together? Funny I don’t see him around then.” He laughs, but it’s humorless and wrong. “Or not. Abandonment does seem to be how he rolls.”

Roy opens his mouth to say something, and Dick is just about to scream at him not to, when Clark gets ahead of both of them.

“Actually, Dick, it only gets funnier from here.”

Judging from his tone it isn’t funny at all, and Dick’s still watching Roy, which means he gets to see the blood leave his face so quickly he’s a surprised the dude doesn’t faint.

“Don’t!” Roy chokes, eyes wide as they pin on Clark. “You promised not to –“

“Unfortunately, I don’t care about lying, Harper,” Clark says smoothly. “Especially not when I can out idiot alphas and their ridiculous notions of keeping omegas safe by breaking their hearts.” Something truly desperate settles over Roy and he takes a step away from the door, “you don’t understand –“

“No. I don’t, actually. See, I got myself one of aforementioned idiot- alphas too, whether he likes it or not, so forgive me if I have no sympathy for the likes of you.”

That smell suddenly engulfs the room again, slithering up Dick from his ankles to the top of his head, name settling on the tip of his tongue. It’s beyond frustrating, somewhere closer to damning; knowing but being unable to say it.

He blinks rapidly, eyes flickering between Clark and Roy and grazing Barry when he curses softly. He looks to Tim who seems just as lost as

Dick.

“I don’t understand what you’re getting at,” he whispers.

The stormy fury on Clark’s face momentarily evaporates as his attention settles on Dick. Instead, he just looks sad.

“I’m sorry Dickie, I really am. But Joker’s been messing with your life for longer than you might think. Apparently, blackmailing Ja –“

Roy—the fucking idiot—attacks.

Which is always a stupid idea because Clark by himself is deadly, but surrounded by two of his enforcers the probability of death elevates from ‘somewhat certain’ to *certain*.

“Don’t!” Dick yells throwing himself towards Roy, but it’s too late.

An inhuman snarl rips through the air and Bruce overtakes him in the blink of an eye, slamming bodily into Roy before he gets within two feet’s distance of Clark. Not even Barry or Wally have managed more than an offensive stance when Roy flies through the air, shoved so hard he lands on the doorsteps outside.

... and when Clark’s hard-headed-almost-alpha, afraid of the way he would leave the world desolate for him, is present, the probability of death becomes a solid matter of fact. Which means Roy’s gonna actually die, if someone doesn’t get through to Bruce.

“Tim, Dami!” Dick barks, sliding around a baffled Clark, who’s staring at his raging alpha like he’s never seen him before. Dick doesn’t look back to see if his brothers follow, too busy getting himself in front of Roy.

He catches up with Bruce moments before Roy’s ankle is caught, and Dick sticks out a leg, twisting and turning, successfully wrestling Bruce to the floor. Rolling up himself he comes to a halt in front of Roy, just as his dad snaps upright with a warning noise.

“Get out of my way,” he says, eyes entirely black and stuck on Roy. Tim and Damian skip to a stop behind him, arms raised and ready to grab.

“Calm down dad, he was just protecting his alpha.” Dick’s speaking

through gritted teeth because Clark is straight-up overflowing with fumes of that damned, unnamable emotion. It's difficult to focus when your entire attention wants to settle on understanding that one thing, but Roy's life is in very real danger, and yeah, Dick's angry with him, but he's not letting him die. Also, when Bruce comes to it, he'll be heartbroken.

"He made his decision, I've made mine."

"Shut it with the drama," Dick takes a step, mirroring the one Bruce makes to get around him which earns him an angry glare, "and listen! Preferably to yourself 'cause you sound like a domineering idiot at the moment, and I know that's not true."

"I am *protecting* —"

"If you call me your omega one more time, Bruce Wayne," Clark whispers from behind. "I'm afraid I'll have to punch you in the face."

Like a switch has been flicked the primal promise of death in Bruce's stance vanishes, like it's never even been there at all. His face falls, and with his back to Clark, no one but Dick and Roy see the look of pure, unaltered grief that overtakes him. Dick assumes the others won't even be able to smell it, seeing as it blends with the low, heavy notes of Clark's own anguish like the knitting of well fitted gloves —

Wait.

Grief.

Sometimes, the world has only been pushed so little out of socket you don't notice it before someone else points it out for you.

"You said—you said Bruce knows. About us?"

Dick's heart misses a beat as reality fades into cottoned silence and cruel clarity threatens to make him implode.

Jason had smelled like grief.

"Bruce knew you and Jay were together," Roy had said, flabbergasted, but Dick heard what he wanted to hear when his friend continued. *"Which means he knows what he did?"*

“*Am I a secret?*” Jason had whispered back then, during the storm, and when Dick jokingly agreed with him it had been bitter *hurt* coating arousal, so easily overlooked in the throes of passion that it makes him sick.

Someone’s calling his name but when he looks up and finds his dad’s face close to his own, all Dick can do is turn his attention to Clark who’s looking back with sad, sad eyes.

“*Joker’s blackmailed Jason,*” was what he was gonna say earlier, which is why Roy attacked. To shut his mouth, because for some reason—which probably starts with Bruce and ends with hilariously bad luck and timing—Jason has been lying to Dick.

There’s a scrapbook of memories flapping across his eyes, tiny moments of half-truths meant as a joke, postponed dinners with no bigger reason behind them than busy schedules, which accumulate into a picture so big Dick’s been blind to it.

His mother’s promise rings through his mind like an echo through empty caves.

No. Life doesn’t have a way of working out. Life has a way hitting you in the face with a bat of unconcerned truths, more like.

“Roy,” he somehow gets out, interrupting the rant Bruce has commenced, begging him to answer. Dick shrugs off his father’s hands, slowly turning to Roy who’s staring resolutely at the gravel beneath his hands. “What did he *do*?”

Despite the wind rustling through pines and bushes and the heavy breaths of several people, Roy’s silence drowns it all out, teeth trapping his lower lip in a tight grip.

“I tried to stop him Dick, I swear.” His voice is barely above a whisper, but it cuts through Dick all the same. “But he was... it’d worried him for a bit, the possibility that Bruce didn’t know. When he thought it was confirmed it broke him a bit, I think. Thought for sure Joker was telling the truth, because Jay had convinced himself the clown knew the Bat’s identity. And then, of course, he would also know if your dad approved of your relationship or not. I don’t know the whole story, but Jason... he just wanted to protect you.”

“Is that supposed to excuse what he did?” Dick asks, mostly himself.

He wants it to. Wants to believe that it's okay for Jason to have touched someone else through the belief that he was protecting Dick. But he can't. There are so many emotions running through him it physically hurts, body unable to settle on feeling one at a time.

At this Roy finally looks up, surprised. "No Dick, Jay did –"

"I know what he did, don't you fucking remind me," Dick hisses, taking a wobbly step down the stairs.

"Son, wait."

Bruce grabs for him, but Dick easily slides away, raising a warning hand as he wanders further into the cold October morning.

"I have no patience left for your escapades, dad. So, either go back to breaking your poor omega's heart, or whatever else floats your boat—or find another hobby but leave me out of it. I'm... I'm taking a drive." Dick stumbles around, bones suddenly hurting.

A hand grabs his wrist, and before he even turns, he knows who it is. Damian is the only one capable of sneaking up on him. Big eyes are brimming with anger and hurt on his behalf, but the worry there is what really guts Dick.

"I'll be waiting for you to come home, you know," Damian whispers, lower lip trembling even as he releases Dick again. Behind him Bruce has an arm around Tim and another out to stop Alfred from advancing. The first few tears escape Dick as his eyes fall back on Damian.

"So, *please*, drive safe."

Dick sobs, body torn between staying and fleeing, but his little brother gives him a push towards the car and says, "he needs to be yelled at."

Dick doesn't look back as he flies out of the driveway, towards Gotham.

There's a multitude of choices to be made, as to what Dick's destination will be.

Damian told him to go yell at Jason, but part of him wants to hit a plane and get as far away as possible.

That idea is very quickly throttled, though. He's too angry to run away right now.

Another option is to kill Joker. He's in the hospital, which is alarmingly easy to break into. Bloodlust fueled by blistering rage chokes at Dick, blinds him. His knuckles itch to hit the cruel fucker, to feel the breaking of bones, just to give him an inkling of what he's done to Dick's heart.

But. At the end of the day, despite various atrocities committed in the name of questionable justice and morality, Dick is neither killer nor torturer.

This means that for a while it's option three; driving aimlessly, yet safely. The image of his baby brother, eyes for once soft and vulnerable, is a hand on the wheel and a keeper of the promise that Dick'll be home safe and sound.

He drives until the sun rises and the car demands fuel. Then he drives some more, radio silent, mind blaring.

Jason didn't trash him because he was afraid of love, he trashed him because *of* love, under the illusion of keeping Dick safe. It's somehow worse, especially because he didn't *ask*. His alpha never put it into words. Instead he decided to make a choice Dick wasn't ever supposed to know about—he disallowed Dick the mutual honor of keeping Jason's heart safe and continued to sully himself by breaking the vow made between them, because no matter the foundations; cheating is cheating.

Dick cries a lot, mostly quietly. Tears streak down his face in endless rivers, soul crushed and body hurting like it's been steamrolled. He's adamant about wiping them away, keeping his vision unobscured, as he drives on until the sun returns towards the horizon.

Sometime around noon he turns his phone off. It's incessant buzzing is driving him nuts—or *more* nuts, that is.

There's a fourth choice, and it's the one Dick eventually makes, mainly because Jason's apartment is only a tad more difficult to enter than Gotham's hospital, and he's feeling petty. To say the least.

He's not home it turns out, when Dick lets himself in somewhere around dinner time, starving and dried of tears.

As usual Jason keeps his fridge empty besides a couple of beers, some sad carrots dying in the back, and day-old takeout, but his freezer is dutifully filled with different kinds of health-freak meals, so Dick steals one of those.

"I'm an idiot," he tells the microwave, staring at the rotation of veggie lasagna heating up.

Most of all Dick is angry with himself. On all accounts he should have known something was up. Either when Jason had a change of heart from one day to the next, and if not that, then at least when he practically melted at being told Bruce knew about them. Although, to be fair, "*he knows about us*" can be interpreted a number of ways, and Jason has done his best painting the picture of a world that's not for them.

How naively Dick jumped into the lie.

Neither microwave nor lasagna offer him any consolation, so instead he tries tuning out by taking in the apartment. It's a desperate attempt to kill the jumble of thoughts in his overactive mind, currently hellbent on committing suicide by useless *what if's* that only succeeds in carving Dick more and more hollow.

It looks like it did five years ago when he was denied entrance. Partly cement, partly dark woods and dark floors with rich carpets. The rooms are large and open, divided by screens of glass, leather furniture soft enough to die for, and a kitchen worthy of a chef.

There are knick-knacks on the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, squeezed in between the overflow of books. They're stubbornly kept out of order, so it always takes several minutes to find what you're looking for, but that's just how Jason likes it.

Tears start pressing again and Dick sucks his lower lip into his mouth.

"Fuck this."

Thing is Jason's terrible at interior, so when Dick started coming over enough that the sparse furniture began hurting his eyes, *he* was the one who decorated the place. And nothing's been changed or thrown out or even replaced. Everything looks like it did back when Dick practically lived here, except for the lack of *his* things. There are no leggings thrown across every available chair to annoy Jason, no hint of Dick's scent apart from the sparse amount that's managed to settle since he broke in. There are no wine bottles in the fridge only for him, because Jason doesn't drink it, but would buy the most expensive shit available just to make Dick smile.

"How absolutely tragic," he scoffs, allowing salty tears to coat his tongue again.

The moon is out and illuminating Jason through the unobscured windows of his apartment.

Dick maps the vague freckles on his chest, drawing stars and words and promises into golden, abused skin. So much has happened to his alpha, so much hurt and betrayal and neglect in the time they didn't know each other.

He makes a quiet promise to never let time mark any signs on Jason's skin, that he won't be there to greet, to love, to prevent, or to heal.

"I love you," he whispers, pressing a kiss to Jason's heart. "I love you."

Half a portion of partially heated lasagna and a shitton of cartoons later Jason's door opens.

Actually it's pushed open, since Dick wasn't in the mood for finesse when arriving, and he absolutely smashed the lock to pieces.

He snuffles, keeping his eyes on the muted TV-screen. It's the only

source of light in the apartment—the sun was still up when he settled down, and he hasn't felt like getting up to turn on the lights yet.

There's an aborted curse in the foyer, then cautious steps, and soon the first notes of whiskey smoke reach Dick, scared shitless from the smell of it. The lights turn on but he refuses to acknowledge Jason, simply keeps his eyes on the manically laughing rabbit on screen.

A big body steps into his peripheral sight. Jason's breathing is labored, heavy pants speaking of a long day of stress.

"Found him," he whispers, voice hoarse. "He's fine. I'll... I'll call you back later, Mr. Wayne."

Dick rips his eyes away from the TV, pinning an incredulous look on Jason.

Who looks *wrecked*.

He slowly lowers the phone under Dick's heavy glare, skin back to pale. His eyes are wild and hair a mess, like he's run his hands through it several times. Good for him, Dick hopes it's *hurt* to look for him.

"Fuck you," he croaks, mortified when he feels himself resume the ridiculous, silent crying. "Now you talk to B? Fuck. You."

Jason closes his eyes, a landscape of devastation.

"Yeah," he agrees.

"Should hate you," Dick continues, tears dripping down into his palms. Any strength his tired body was still in possession of before Jason came home, seems to have left the building, because Dick can't find it in himself to move at all. Even though he really wouldn't mind punching the asshole in the face. "But I can't even do that. How much more pathetic can it get?"

"Dick, please," Jason whispers, opening his eyes. They shine with unshed tears. "Listen to me. I know this doesn't change anything, okay? I messed up and I'm asking nothing of you, baby. Nothing at all. After this I... I'll do whatever you want." His voice breaks over the last word. "I'll leave Gotham for good, and you'll never have to see me again. Say the word and I'm gone, but not before you know the truth.

Roy said –“

“I know what Roy said!” Dick hisses, some of the fight reentering him. He pushes to his feet, stalking away from Jason, towards the south of the apartment and the huge windows overlooking the city. “What I *want*, Jason Todd, is the goddamned truth! So, either you’re gonna tell me exactly why you allowed Joker to tear us apart, or I disappear. For good this time.”

Jason makes a pained noise, closer to a whine than actual crying. The brutal hand he uses to chase tears away is redundant; new ones quickly take the old ones’ place, but he doesn’t seem to notice.

Instead he nods, frantic. “Okay. Of course. I’ll just. Maybe you want to sit down? It’s a long story.”

Dick presses his lips tight. “No.”

“Fuck, okay, of course.” Jason takes a step back, like Dick is a frightened animal. His eyes flicker between the foyer and Dick, wild, like he’s expecting Dick to bail any second. “A few hours before I told you we were over,” he begins, looking like the words physically hurt him. Swell. They certainly rip at Dick. “I got a message from Joker. Remember how we were onto him about the Giggle-Murders?”

Oh, definitely. Dick’s not soon to forget that atrocity.

He and Jason had been working together on solving a string of horrid murders, where all victims wore the same, brilliant laugh on their mutilated faces. They’d pretty quickly decided to put their focus on Joker (obviously) but Dick left Gotham before the case closed. Last he heard, the murderer had been captured and it wasn’t Joker, but he can’t remember the name.

Dick jerks a nod, and Jason continues.

“Killer was a fan of Joker’s, murders funded by the clown himself ‘cause he found it hilarious. So, when we started closing in, Joker got pissed. The message said to meet an informant at the docks, that they had some kind of information on the Giggle-Murderer and... I knew you would say no, but the last vic in the morgue was a kid, I couldn’t *not* go Dickie.” He exhales harshly. “I went alone. Even then I knew it was the dumb thing to do. You can say a lot of things ‘bout the clown, but he ain’t stupid. He knew how to hook me.”

Dick stares as Jason starts picking at his nails, head lowered, and brows furrowed. There's shame in the hunch of his shoulders.

"Anyway," Jason murmurs. "I went and it wasn't some nameless informant waitin' for me. The minute I saw him, I knew it was a trap but I'm me so—" he shrugs. "Long story short he threw an envelope at me. With, uh. With pictures, of Hood and Wing being *cozy*."

Dick has an idea as to where this is going, and he kind of wants to shut Jason up, but his mouth isn't working. Or maybe it's his vocal cords which—along with the rest of his insides—have been carved out. The very air of the room seems to have drawn back, like the ocean gearing up for a tsunami.

Unstoppable.

"Then he told me he would tattle to Bats." Jason's voice is egg-shell frail, no louder than a whisper, and Dick closes his eyes against the truth settling around them. "And how it would ruin everything for you, how little Batman liked my reputation. And I believed him Dick, I did. With my whole heart. Joker knows the Batman, has dedicated his life to him, right? And you never..." he stops himself, muttering something under his breath.

The air reeks of shame and self-disgust, when Dick forces himself to acknowledge reality again.

"I never introduced you to dad," he finishes for him, softly.

He'd planned to, so many times, but for some reason it never worked out. Either Jason was busy, or Dick was. Bruce is always busy, so pinning him is next to impossible. When none of them had anything on their plate, a third party did and made sure to involve them.

"So," he says quietly, something thick and ugly raising in his throat. "You're telling me that the last five, shitty years of our lives happened because of bad timing and a single misunderstanding."

The words taste like shit—like acid. They burn and burn and burn. Dick buries his hands in his hair, pulling to the point of too much, desperate for some kind of semblance as to what is real and what is not. It feels like a nightmare, like he should wake up every second now and find himself in bed with Jason years earlier, with no broken future laughing at them from between the shards.

"I am so sorry, Dick," Jason croaks, finally raising his eyes to meet Dick's and effectively ruining any hope Dick had that this isn't real.

Jason's crying now, properly, without trying to rid himself of it. Cheeks wet, breath hitching every now and then as they stare at each other.

"There's nothing to say that'll make this right. Joker gave me a couple hours to get away from you. Apparently, he didn't like the idea of *us*. Said it would ruin the family. And I know Bruce loves you, but he's—*Batman's* another thing, and Joker said you would definitely be banned from the field, kicked out of the business."

That fucking nut-job, Dick's gonna kill him. Joker has always babbled on about how the Bats and him are connected by something thicker than blood, that it shouldn't be polluted. Dick just never thought that dubious honor extended to him.

What had Joker said to him that night at the train station? *"Imagine, someone capable of killing Nightwing's smile."*

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions," he says, numb to the bones. "This changes nothing, Jason."

"I—I *know*," Jason whines, taking a wobbly step towards Dick, but stops when he raises a hand in warning. Jason looks a little beyond repair, like the mirror version of Dick. "Sorry' doesn't do shit, but I never meant to hurt you, and all the stupid crap I said about you being boring s'not true Dickie, you have to know that. You're the most beautiful, kindhearted, amazing man I know, and I never really deserved you to begin with. I just didn't want to take your family away," he swallows, eyes big and wet. "They're your everything. Bruce is your *dad*, and I wasn't gonna ruin anything between you guys, just because I needed you —"

"But you were my everything too, damnit Jay!" Dick cries, and Jason flinches. He's unraveling from the inside out, everything tearing to pieces; his heart, his mind, his soul. "I'd finally found home with you. I was thinking of shifting sides, did you know? Was gonna be your enforcer, have kids with you and do stupid, domestic shit with you for the rest of my fucking life. I wanted to grow *old* with you Jay, and I don't wanna grow old at all." Dick can't breathe. He's gasping for air, entirely hysteric, but he's also beyond caring at this point. "Yeah,

great, you did it from the bottom of your heart with my best in mind and yadayada, but tell me *why* you had to hammer home the lie by screwing every available omega in town?!”

“Wait,” Jason gasps, but Dick doesn’t stop.

“We could’ve gone *back*, you stupid fucker!”

“Dick, listen.”

“This didn’t have to be the endline, if you hadn’t been such an idiot –“

“I didn’t!”

Dick stops, mouth snapping shut as Jason’s desperate yell rings out into echoes.

They stare at each other, words settling between them. Jason’s shaking his head, raising both hands, palms up.

“Didn’t.” He blinks away tears. “Dick, I swear to everything, I’ll swear on my mother’s grave, I didn’t fuck anyone.”

“Don’t lie to me,” Dick whispers, lungs useless meat-lumps in his chest. “Don’t you fucking lie to me.”

He’s done, absolutely done. Fuck Jason and his stupid morals, they’ve ruined everything. If Dick wants any chance to mend himself after this, he’s gotta leave now. Turning, he stalks towards the open door.

“Just wait, Dickie please!” Jason reaches into a pocket grabbing his phone, desperately thumbing through it. “I’m not lying, not now sweetheart, but I did back then. There are messages, they’ll prove it. Had to pull a million strings and pay a fuckload of money, but with enough of it, you can make anyone in Gotham do whatever you want, you know this.” He tosses the phone to Dick who catches it with flailing hands. “Especially sully an up-and-coming business man’s reputation. Please read it,” he begs. “Please.”

It’s too good to be true. Problems don’t just solve themselves like this in Dick’s life and honestly, everything points to him being fucked over again, but he’s gonna open the damned phone and look anyway, and it’s gonna break his heart. Because that’s just who Dick Grayson Wayne is; the guy who gets his heart broken.

First his parents died, then Bruce cut Clark out of their lives, effectively robbing Dick of yet another father-figure. Then Tim almost lost Conner around the same time everyone almost lost Damian. Then Jason.

Dick looks.

... and then he does a doubletake.

“I thought, maybe if I could make you hate me, the bond would die faster, make it easier for you,” Jason whispers as Dick flies through mails and pictures and names and bills which combined fix an acronym that proves he’s being told the truth, and he’s only listening with only half an ear, because Jason really isn’t lying not now, not anymore, “read it somewhere. That—that something like that would do it. Doesn’t mean... I’m not the good guy here. Fucked up for real this time, but I never wanted you to hurt, omega. *Never*. And I’m so sorry that I did it anyway.”

The bills tell of thousands of dollars spent on various omegas—all for rent, through various bureaus—all of whom is hooked to a single, encrypted email thread in which Jason asks them to lie for him.

Sure you don’t want the real deal, hon? Someone responds, a lot responds like that, but Jason just... he fucking...

No. I’m a taken man.

It’s greeted by a bunch of salacious jokes, and the generally accepted estimation that he’s taking the piss on them. Because obviously that’s the case, when he’s asking for what he is. But Jason never replies to any of that, simply sends the money and slowly the thread dies out.

“Roy helped.”

Dick stares blindly at the phone, mind stuck on *taken man* and *it’s Gotham, with enough money anything’s possible* and a billion other tiny things. He thinks of how Jason wouldn’t let him into his apartment back then, how he wasn’t allowed close enough to touch, and when Dick bullied his way into his personal sphere, when he loomed over his alpha, on his knees looking so, so broken, Dick had held his breath.

The phone slides from numb hands, thump muted on the heavy carpet

below.

"I'm not asking you for anything," Jason repeats quietly. "But I didn't touch 'em—*haven't*. Not one. That part of our bond, at least, I haven't sullied."

"... don't know."

Jason blinks. "What?"

"I don't know what to –" Dick chokes, knees buckling dangerously. "What to do now. Am I supposed to just forget?"

Jason takes an aborted step towards him, face crumpling in despair. "Nonono Dick, omega. Listen to me, I will never ask you anything you're not willing to give –"

"Then how the fuck will you know?"

Jason finally closes his mouth.

Dick stares right back at the flabbergasted look he's sent.

"How will you know what I want, Jason, what I'm okay with losing, if you won't speak to me?" he snarls.

Jason doesn't seem to have anything to say to that, eyes wide with shock, so Dick rocks on.

"I can see how time was of the essence here, but you could've *asked* me. Do you know what I would've said? *Come have dinner.*" He blinks against another round of hot tears. "*Joker doesn't know shit; he's pulling one on you. Bruce has looked forward to meeting you ever since I told him about us.* And the funniest fucking part of this entire shit-show? He was the first one I told, Jason! I was so proud of calling you mine. If B had anything to say against that, I would've sicced Alfred on him," Dick whines. "Also, if you're not quite aware of this yet, we were *mated*! How could I *ever hate you*!? I chose you, you stupid –"

"But I'm not good mate material," Jason groans, and Dick's mouth snaps shut with an audible click.

Jason's rubbing and rubbing against tears he won't even allow himself to shed now, because to him, this is all about Dick. To Jason it's never

been about himself.

The fire dies and is replaced by ice, slithering into the marrow in a cruel raid of too late realization. All fight leaves Dick in a rush, adrenaline fizzling out into the ether as silence falls heavy around them.

“Shit,” he whispers. Shame has a particular feeling; a piece of coal forced down your throat, unwilling to die out as it settles in the gut.

He never thought that Jason’s, sometimes obsessive, self-loathing would expand to widths as extreme as this, but maybe he should’ve. He *knows* his best friend, his love. Which means that Jason’s not the only one who failed as a mate here.

God above Dick really, really messed up too. He closes his eyes for a brief minute of pure, overwhelming defeat—where they go from here, if there even is somewhere to go... Dick has no clue.

“I’m sorry,” he eventually says, voice small. Jason, predictably, begins protesting before Dick’s even finished talking, but he shuts up at the look he’s sent. “I listened. You’re gonna listen. I am sorry, Jay. For a lot of things, but mostly for not seeing that you were hurting. As a mate that’s my responsibility, and I failed you. I am also sorry for not pushing an introduction harder.”

“It’s okay –“

“I told you to shut up didn’t I? Please, sweetheart,” Dick whispers, a bone deep exhaustion weighing his shoulders down. “Let me—let me make things right.” He doesn’t know exactly what things he’s referring too, or if there’s anything left to fix, but right now they both need to pretend there is. “We’re not mending one broken heart here, there are two in need of care. And ours have always worked best together. So, *please*. Let me mend.”

Jason presses his lips together, slumping against the glass panel behind him, but nods in reluctant acceptance.

“It’s *not* okay,” Dick whispers, and Jason looks away. “I knew how much it meant to you, meeting B. There was shit going on, and I prioritized your needs below the city and my family’s, even when you laid yourself down flat for me. I am so sorry for that.”

Jason has this thing about dads. On one hand, he respects the living hell out of them, on the other, he would smite them the second they looked at their kid the wrong way, no second thoughts, and no-killing rule be damned. Dick's been told the story of Willis Todd exactly once, but it was enough to install a hatred so deeply rooted and burning, he still dreams of killing the scum himself.

Point is, he was lazy; figured Jason and him would have their whole life to do stuff as trivial as meeting parents. Except it isn't trivial to Jason, far from it. To him, meeting Bruce is meeting Dick's most precious treasure.

It also explains his strong reaction to Joker's threat, because losing a good father is worse than dying, and something valuable enough to break what they had for.

He still isn't looking at Dick, face turned to the night outside.

"Should've just told you," Jason mumbles stubbornly. "But I was scared."

"Yeah," Dick agrees, quiet. It's true. And it hurts.

They've arrived at a standstill, a crossroad. The gallows. Either they die here for good this time, or they surpass.

But... no matter where they end, he knows where he wants them to begin again.

Dick has always been too easy at forgiving, so he's taught himself how not to. He knows when to bend and believe in himself, in the choice he makes, because if he didn't, the ruthless anarchy of Gotham's streets would have taken his life years ago.

"Jason I –"

A familiar, eerie thump and roll of something hard down the floors interrupts him, and then the door to the hall shuts.

In what feels like slow-motion Dick turns to stare at the grenade rolling cheerfully towards them—a laughing, red mouth sloppily painted on it, safety gone. Running steps outside echo through the tense quiet around them, as doom fills every nook and cranny of Jason's apartment.

“Get down!” Jason barks, finally wrestling Dick out of the shocked stupor he’s fallen into, and he whips towards Jason, body finally moving. But Jason’s moving too; full sprint bringing him close to Dick in a matter of seconds.

They slam into each other, only Jason’s momentum is greater, body bigger, and he throws them to the floor behind the couch. There’s whiskey and smoke and thunder all around them, panic rising as Jason curls around Dick who thrashes to reverse the position.

“No! Nononono Jay, baby, please! Let go of me, you have to –“ *You have to let me take it instead*, he doesn’t say, because Jason loses a pained moan and then there are lips pressed to the top of his head, strong arms holding him tight.

“I love you, Bluebird,” Jason whispers. “I love –“

“No!”

There’s a boom followed by pain, a weird metallic click and the floor disappearing. Then Dick is swallowed by blinding, white light.

Chapter End Notes

not me throwing a grenade at them because I didn't know how to write these fools back together--and no, I will take no criticism on this

honestly I'm considering tagging crack or suspension of belief, because this is getting a little ridiculous (: don't pretend to cheat kids, it's big dumb-bitch-energy

also, the chapter count went up because I can't math. I haven't written more, I'm just unable to count < 3

catch me

Chapter Notes

once again--you guys are wonderful, you make me cry <3 thank you for all the comments and kudos and general awesomeness

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Life has a way of working out, little sun," his mother chuckles. "Don't look so sad."

"But I fell," Dick whines, pushing her hands off him.

"And you will do so many more times." She winks, bright blue eyes exploding into a sky, and Dick is falling, gaze glued to the infinity above him. It's a quiet descent to the ground, which he assumes is waiting somewhere below him.

A hand grabs his shoulder, and he turns to find Bruce falling beside him.

"There's nothing wrong with falling, Richard," he smiles, "as long as we have someone to pick us up."

"He's right you know." Dick looks to his left, towards Clark's voice and is met with a brilliant smile, entirely unconcerned with their continuous journey towards an unmoving ground. "That's what family is for."

"But you left," Dick says.

Clark shakes his head. "Just because something is out of sight it doesn't mean it's gone."

"You were in Metropolis, we only saw you at Christmas" Tim says, somewhere by Dick's shoulder, and a moment later Damian chimes in by the other. "That didn't make you any less of a brother."

"That's not true," Dick whispers. "I wasn't there when you needed me."

"Sometimes it's okay to let other people bear the burdens too heavy to carry, Master Dick." Alfred takes his hand, wrinkled skin soft, lines fitting with Dick's like a jigsaw puzzle.

Strong arms wind around his waist followed by a body so warm and big it

manages to block out the chill cutting through him by the rushing wind. Whiskey smoke settles within the storm, tightly woven by his family's time-honored cocktail of scents and Clark's windy fields.

"Jay," he breathes, head falling back to rest in the crook between his mate's shoulder and neck. A cheek presses against his own, breath tickling his skin.

"Hey, baby."

"I'm not letting you go this time," Dick vows, free hand coming to a rest on top of Jason's. "Falling is a lot scarier without you around, so there's no more leaving."

"I think I can get behind that," Jason laughs. "Ready to come back now?"

Yeah. With this many hands to help him? It should be perfectly easy to get back up, Dick thinks.

"The signal is stronger over here!"

"Don't lose it Tim."

Dick comes to for a short, painful moment. He's pulled out of blunt darkness by stomping feet and frantic voices shouting above him, and he blinks against utter darkness.

What happened?

Absolutely everything hurts, excruciatingly so, and Dick doesn't feel the least bit dramatic thinking that. His head is throbbing like someone is taking the sharp end of a pickaxe to it again and again and again. The right side of his torso is ablaze and he's having trouble breathing, but that's probably because something heavy is weighing down on him. If only he could –

Dick finally gasps a breath; immediately overwhelmed by whiskey smoke.

The grenade.

It all comes back in a whirlwind of sharp light and noise. Fear grips him tight as he realizes not what, but *who* exactly is weighing down on him, completely unmoving.

“N–no, please don... Jay,” he hiccups, trying to ignore the pain, the fear, the panic. “Alpha please. You have to wake up.”

But Jason remains motionless and quiet like the dead, and even if he didn’t weigh a ton, Dick doesn’t have the strength to rustle, not even a little. Darkness is absolute around him, although he’s unsure if the culprit of that is the incoming unconsciousness he can feel tickling his fingertips, or because of their unknown location. Memories of what happened are flaky at best, but he’s pretty sure the floor went out under them, which must mean they’re somewhere beneath the debris.

Except, when Dick lets his fingertips run along the surface beneath him it’s smooth and cold and definitely not stone or wood.

“Here! B, I think they’re down here!”

That’s Tim, Dick thinks, eyelids growing heavy. *Dad’s here. It’ll be fine.*

As unconsciousness becomes a gravitational pull too demanding to ignore, Dick feels around with the only operative hand he’s got—the other seems to be pinned under the deadweight of his alpha—until he finds Jason’s. Lacing their fingers together is the last thing he does before the world disappears again.

“I would die for you,” Jason says, too serious. Dick can’t argue with him. Not when he’d do the same twenty times over.

Next time Dick checks back in, the world is covered in a haze, blunted and made porridgelike by what he assumes is medication. What wakes him is the frantic vocabulary of an ER and the instinctual realization that someone’s moving Jason away from him.

There’s an attempt of expressing great distaste in that decision but Dick doesn’t manage more than a pathetic whine at best. He’s moving, lights causing spots to dance across his already obscured sight.

They can't move Jason, they *can't*. If they do Dick will die. He'll implode into a black hole, consuming the rest of the world as he leaves.

“ – don't! Get me back there right now you sonofabitch, or I'll –“ the rest of Jason's furious scolding drowns in the buzz of knee-jerking relief wracking through Dick, at the sound of him awake and kicking. Hoarsely awake and kicking maybe, sounding absolutely demolished and nowhere near his normal levels of impious, but *alive*.

It'll be fine. His alpha's got this; he won't let them be separated. Dick can sleep.

“Are you fucking deaf or simply idiotic? I'm his mate, the pheromones will work better than any of your stupid –“

Dick clocks back out to the sweet sound of Jason railing hellfire upon the poor doctors and nurses rushing them to salvation.

“I would live for you,” Dick shoots back a few days later.

Third time's the charm and when he opens his eyes, the picture is clear. Literally *and* metaphorically.

Everything that happened pings online like a giant billboard, and he chokes a little on the inhale, heart launching itself into a wild staccato that sends his monitor wild.

It isn't like in the books, where the memories come slowly with a dramatic uptick that sends the hero into a full-blown panic attack. Dick simply dives straight into that.

Forcing down twenty deep breaths once he's done coughing up his lungs and his airways are clear again, he manages to quiet the beeps considerably. No need to scare the nurses into rushing over. Dick demands a moment of quiet reflection here, before he's forced into acknowledging anything remotely connected to stupid reality. Especially because reality isn't making a whole lot of sense at the

moment.

It's overwhelming to say the least. A jumble of memories he understands and remembers but with no chronological order whatsoever.

Grenade. Jason's body on top of his own and a kiss that felt too much like goodbye. A blast that hurt. Then darkness.

Staring up into the boring white of the hospital ceiling Dick does his level best to catch his breath, as every little tidbit of happening settle into a perceivable picture. He doesn't know how long it takes, but in the end he's got a pretty good idea of what went down when. That in itself rises a tsunami of new questions demanding answers, worries to quell.

But first things first.

There's a dull pain beating against his skull, so when he turns to look right, he does it very slowly and *very* carefully.

Jason hasn't made a sound. Hasn't moved. Yet somehow Dick just knew he would be there the second he woke up. He blinks rapidly against the sudden burning in his eyes at the sight of his alpha; big and quiet and sleeping but breathing regularly.

Jason's eyebrows are pulled into a little frown, skin pale and covered in bandages and band aids. The monitor connected to him is beeping calmly, and Dick can't see any casts, which doesn't mean nothing is broken but it could be worse. Bangs lay matted against his forehead, the white streak a mess begging for Dick to comb it back into its preferred location.

All in all Jason's alive and doesn't look like he's about to die.

The tears come slow but surely, and Dick cries quietly in fear of waking Jason up, eyes trained on him as he tries to convince his body they'll be okay.

There are at least three feet between their beds, but Dick reaches out a hand nonetheless. Tracing a finger in the air and following the line of Jason's face (turned to Dick, *always* turned to Dick) isn't exactly what he wants, but it'll have to do until he can threaten some poor personnel or a family member into pushing them close.

Dick snivels, hand going limp over the edge of the bed. One thing's for certain, Dick isn't gonna let him fucking leave. Never again. Jason's just gonna have to deal, guilt be damned.

Hurried steps echo down the hall outside, a hushed conversation traveling through the cracked door, and a moment later Bruce rushes in, followed closely by a tired looking doctor and a couple nurses.

"Richard?" Bruce exhales, and Dick wrestles his attention from Jason so he can smile at his dad. He thinks he manages a tiny pull of a lip.

"Hiya," he croaks. "You look like shit."

"Oh thank god," Bruce whispers, an uncharacteristic stumble bringing him the rest of the way over. His voice is frailer than Dick's ever heard it, but the warm hand which grabs his own is strong. "Thank god."

Despite the painkillers and overall exhaustion keeping Dick loopy, he's still aware enough to understand what the shaking of his father's shoulder means, so he wriggles carefully to face him properly.

"M okay," he promises. "I'm a daisy."

One of the nurses snorts, tapping at a computer while the other putters around, messing with the things connected to Dick.

Bruce rubs his free hand across his face once, before letting it drop. He really does look like some who hasn't slept for a year, eyes red and puffy from crying, but although the perpetual bags under them is darker than ever, he still smiles wryly at Dick and says, "fresh as a daisy?"

"S what I said."

"I'm glad to see your usual faculty of delivering jokes at the most impossible of times is well preserved at least. Tim too."

"Oh, they made a betting pool?" Bruce nods, exasperated. "Who's winning?"

The doctor takes a step closer, clearly done waiting, and Bruce mumbles a quiet *later*—shuffling out of the way.

“Hello, Mr. Wayne,” Doctor—Dick squints at the nametag—Smith says. Doctor Smith. Hilarious.

“Evening.” Dick winks at him. “I’m not sorry about my family or their loudness, but sorry.”

The forced smile is very professional, Dick’ll give him that. “No need. From what I’ve heard of what happened, you’re lucky to be alive. And moving.” A raised brow, and suddenly Bruce is innocence itself. “Of course, your family will be worried. Now, if I could just give you a rundown of the injuries –“

“Oh, great! How’s he doing?”

“Dick,” Bruce sighs, but his eyes are soft.

Doctor Smith glances at Jason’s bed. “Maybe we could start with you, sir.”

“No thank you,” Dick says seriously. “Tell me about my mate.”

Bruce mumbles something under his breath, moving to the other side of Dick’s bed to slump into a chair and levels a cool, expectant gaze at their dear doctor, when he remains quiet for a beat too long.

“Multiple shallow lacerations to the skin, mainly thanks to the debris projected from the blast,” he begins stiffly, another victim of the Wayne Glare. “Three of which were in need of stitching but nothing fatal. Otherwise, he has sustained a mild concussion. Both of you, in fact.” Oh well, judging by his throbbing head, anything less would’ve surprised Dick. “Regarding recovery, I doubt it will take more than a couple of weeks. Now, a little more seriously. The floor did crumble, and Mr. Todd seems to have been squeezed at some point –“

The monitor goes off as Dick cuts his eyes to Jason, heart in his throat.

“– which has resulted in two broken ribs. Again, nothing close to fatal,” Doctor Smith hurries to add. “It will simply take him a little longer to recover from that. You both were very lucky.”

Dick exhales a long, shuddering breath, sending a tiny prayer of thanks to the god he might have to believe in after today.

“Okay,” he whispers.

“Can I cover your own injuries now, Mr. Wayne?”

“I—yeah. ‘Course. Thanks.”

A sigh. “You have broken an arm.”

Dick blinks, cranes his neck and—oh yeah. Would you look at that, his left arm. That’s a cast he’s pretty sure. “Huh.”

“Give me strength,” Bruce mutters, as Doctor Smith hurries through the rest of Dick’s collected maladies. For being caught in an explosion it’s hilariously short. Like Jason he’s got a couple of cuts to the skin, but not as deep and not as many. Which makes sense since the fool threw himself on top first. Dick’s gonna kick his sorry ass for that later. There’s the concussion, some mild burns to his left hand, but that’s it.

“Right?”

“Right,” Doctor Smith sighs, clearly done in all the ways it counts. “I suppose you could say that. You wouldn’t happen to know, how it came to be, that you and Mr. Todd managed to get away with injuries this small and far in between, Mr. Wayne? You father seems to have no idea.”

Dick raises a brow. “Honestly, I blacked out pretty quick, Doc. Kind of what happens when you’re blasted in the face with a grenade, a designer couch can only do so much, really. But try Jason when he wakes.”

Bruce kills a laugh on a cough. “Actually Dick, Jason was lucid for a while an hour or so ago. He unfortunately couldn’t enlighten the doctor either.”

Dick blinks, another exhale loosening his muscles. Jason’s been awake? And annoying the living shit out of people too if the tic under poor doctor Smith’s eye is anything to go by. He loves Jason. Absolutely adores him.

“You see? Now, who’s gonna push our beds together?”

After doctor Smith runs away—sadly leaving three feet between Jason and Dick, with the poor excuse that, in *their conditions, moving is currently out of the question, give it at least a couple of hours*—Dick turns to Bruce and demands an explanation.

“One of Joker’s men somehow got a tracking device on Jason. It led them right back to you. Tim thankfully caught them talking about it over the comms, so we managed to send the capsule just in time. Or, well...” Bruce interrupts himself, expression pinching. “Almost in time.”

A vague memory of smooth cold under his finger in the pitch black, with Jason’s unconscious body atop his own, resurfaces. Lately Bruce and Tim have been working on a so-called emergency capsule—you know, if someone ever decides to throw bigger things at us than knives, bullets, and the occasional sword—however it’s quickly deemed unessential by his medicated brain.

“They know who Jay is?” That would be very far from good, and Dick almost manages to gear up for some half-hearted freaking out, but Bruce thankfully shakes his head.

“We found the culprits. They didn’t bother to inform any of their associates before attacking or find out who the Hood is. Most likely they thought the grenade would make such precautions unnecessary.”

“Did it have anything to do with Joker and Crow’s tango of world domination and idiocy?”

“Nothing more than revenge, no. The device was most likely planted in the fight. Clark says Jason was in midst of the conflict.”

Dick starts to roll his eyes but that actually hurts pretty bad, so he settles for a tired sigh. “Of course, he was.”

The things this man does. Dick’s gonna put a leash on him. Oh, wait, that reminds him.

“Hey, B.”

“Hm?”

“He didn’t do it. Cheat, I mean. We were talking before someone tried to murder us. So, I’m not gonna let him get away again.”

And nothing anyone says will change that. Yes, Jason hurt him. Hurt them *both* because he loved so much. They'll talk some more; Dick will have him know what the rules are from now on should any of them ever be blackmailed into leaving the other again, and maybe yell a little if he feels up for it.

Bruce's cool blue turns warm and sad. "I know. Roy gave us the rundown after you drove off. I can't say I approve of his methods, but..." after a loaded moment in which the full force of his dad's attention rests on Jason, Bruce nods slowly. "He would do anything for you. I'm a little upset he thought I'd kick you out, though."

Dick turns to look as well, smile sad. "Jason never had a dad. Just some asshole to beat him up every other day when he dragged his drunk ass back home."

As if he knows they're talking about him, Jason lets out a long exhale, twitching for a moment, before he goes quiet again.

"Push me over," Dick whispers.

"No."

"Coward."

Bruce just squeezes his hand.

"Please go back to sleep Dick," Tim groans a couple of hours later, after Dick was further denied transportation to Jason and rudely knocked out by medication.

Unfortunately for everyone he's awake now and ready to throw himself out of bed if his wishes aren't met. His youngest brother has strategically climbed into bed with him on the excuse of keeping him off his feet, but Damian isn't fooling anyone, not with the way he's trying to merge with Dick's good side.

He'd been a blur, rushing through the open doors and barely avoided Dick's broken arm in a hug of death, wailing, and fury.

"I'm so fucking angry with you," he'd sniveled. "Don't ever do that

again.”

Dick had to swallow twice so the lump in his throat wouldn't be audible. “I'm sorry, sweetheart. Avoiding grenades from now on, promise.”

Then Tim had stumbled in, white as a ghost and put his arms around Damian and Dick both, shoulders shaking. For a very long time the three of them had stayed like that, Dick with his brothers in one arm, and so gut stabbing grateful he got to see them again.

After that, siblings and other family members have been coming and going in a steady flow of threats, tears, and hugs. Most memorable are Babs, Steph and Cass who tag-teamed him into both apologizing for having a grenade thrown at his person—like it was *his* fault—and give them an entire day of sister shenanigans when he's up for it again.

Kate looked incredibly unimpressed by Bruce and Tim's capsule despite their obvious pride.

“And how are you gonna explain it?”

“We've eradicated all evidence.”

“The lack of common sense despite that astronomical IQ of yours never ceases to baffle me, Bruce. And don't you run off now Timothy, I'm insulting you too.”

Alfred had been a punch to the gut, frail arms shaking as he held Dick tighter than was strictly comfortable.

“My boy,” Alfred had whispered, hand stroking Dick's hair. “My boy.”

Right now however, everyone is mostly annoying as fuck, and Dick is strongly considering throwing a pillow at Tim. Ultimately, he deems it a waste of energy.

“I will not. If Conner was in the hospital and someone told you not to cuddle him, you would be an even bigger pain in the ass than me.”

“Excuse you, that is factually incorrect in so many ways, I don't even know where to begin.” Tim sniffs, wriggling in aforementioned alpha's lap because he's a spiteful bastard. “If the doctor tells me no, I tend to do what he says and, you know, *survive*.”

“Simmer down there, Hamlet, I’m not dying.”

“Anymore.”

“Gentlemen,” Alfred cuts in, clearly over any sentimentality. “Kindly be quiet. I have raised you better than this.”

“We –“ Bruce begins, but shuts up at the look he’s sent. “Okay. Fair enough. Maybe I didn’t give them the good manners. But I *did* teach them how to survive.”

“Yes, very good, sir,” Alfred says, voice drier than the Sahara.

Dick snarls. He’s so close to whining. So close, and that’ll just be embarrassing for everyone. “Somebody better fucking *push me* right this instant, or I’ll do unspeakable things to your personal belongings.”

“Once you can walk again without wincing in pain every other minute, I’ll be happy to escort your old ass over there,” Tim chortles, the little shit.

“I’m twenty-eight, not a fossil. Also, it’s a broken arm and a teeny-tiny concussion, not a severed foot!”

“Then why are you whining like it is?”

“Keep the attitude and I’m gonna show Conner your stalker-folder on him!”

A glimmer of interest sparks in Conner’s eyes, while Tim pales so fast, it’s a wonder he doesn’t brain himself on the floor.

“*You promised not to –*“

“Eat shit, Tim.”

“Master Richard,” Alfred says.

“Yes, yes, I know *watch my language*. It would be a lot easier, if Tim wasn’t being such a pain in the ass!”

“Yeah why don’t you shut up, Drake?” Damian needles without looking up from Dick’s phone. He’s playing one of the games that

sometimes mysteriously appears on Dick's home screen.

"Who asked you gremlin? Like you want him to move!"

"... Master Richard."

"What is that supposed to mean? Do you think I'm sitting here because I *want* to?"

"There's snot all over the Mercedes from you bawling, don't even try me."

"Shut your whore mouth before I do it for you!"

"Why is nobody listening to me? I'm the one in the hospital! *I* am the one who had grenades thrown at him!"

Bruce flips a page in the paper he's reading, humming in soft surprise. "Oh, look Alfred. That building I was thinking of buying has structural damages. Good thing you talked me out of it."

"It was *one* grenade, calm your tits –"

"That is quite *enough*," Alfred booms, effectively garnering all attention in the room.

Dick's mouth clicks shut on the proverbial murder he was about to level at Tim, shrinking a little at the exasperated and silent *I taught you better than this*, which Alfred perfectly conveys by glare alone.

"It pains me that I now must invoke everyone's right for cake the next month –" the loud protest dies before it even begins, slain by another uptick of a grey brow – "if you do not like this, then I might propose some quiet reflection on how to avoid such a sanction in the future. In all my days I have never experienced a lot as loud as you, and frankly it lost its charm about an hour ago. Master Richard."

Dick swallows. "Alfred."

"Perhaps you would like to know that Mister Todd is awake."

"Wha –" He snaps his neck around so quickly the world spins for a good long while, and Damian has to put in some weight to keep him up. Right, concussion.

“Fuck’s sake, Dick,” Damian mumbles, but it lacks any heat.

Eventually Dick’s vision sharpens and meets wide, green eyes.

Jason looks like he’s been dragged through hell and back, clearly uncomfortable to the brink of actual, physical pain. He mostly stares at Dick, face stuck in a grimace somewhere between terrified and desperate, but every now and then his eyes will flicker around the room, switching between the various family members present, and the door. Planning an emergency exit no doubt.

“Dad,” Dick whispers. “You better carry me over there right now.”

This time Bruce gets up without a word, momentarily blocking Jason from Dick’s sight as he bends down, scooping him into his arms.

“Damian, grab the IV,” Bruce mutters.

It takes no more than three steps with Bruce’s long legs before Dick is where he wants to be, lowered into Jason’s bed at his good side. Jason keeps quiet, lips pressed tight, but lifts his arm to curl it around Dick’s waist.

The moment Bruce’s hands leave him, he’s pulled flush against Jason.

A low whine starts somewhere in the back of his throat, as he presses his face into Dick’s neck, apparently unbothered by the audience now that he’s got a bed full of his needy omega.

Dick answers with a pitiful little sound himself, uninjured hand burying in Jason’s thick hair to press even closer. He only vaguely notices Alfred herding everyone out, a shuffle of feet against carpet.

Slowly—despite the top of the art scent blockers installed in the hospital—Jason’s scent pushes everything else out, enveloping them in a cocoon mixed with Dick’s own storm. In the end, even the accelerated beeping of Jason’s monitor tapers down

“Jason.” Dick doesn’t notice Bruce has hesitated by the door until he speaks up. His hand tightens in Jason’s hair when he stiffens. “Thank you. For saving my son’s life. I owe you my own.”

“Mh,” Jason eventually mumbles, still hidden in Dick’s throat.
“Anytime.”

The door closes with a soft thud.

A clock ticks somewhere, counting the moving seconds of a sunbeam traveling across the wall, as Jason slowly begins heaving in deep, wrecking sobs. They overtake his entire frame, which can't possibly feel good with the state of his ribs, but... personal experience tells Dick the pain will be worth it.

The arm around his waist gets heavier and heavier as Jason relaxes more into the realization that they're okay, that they're alive and mostly well. The finer nuances of his scent keep somewhere close to sad, but there's a soft happiness blooming between the blues, promises of dark days edging to an end. Calloused fingertips slip under Dick's gown, traveling up and down his skin, as they silently reacquaint themselves with the feel of one another.

For all he cares, Dick would stay like this for the rest of his life. Although, maybe without the injuries, and if he could tease a smile out of his mate at some point that would be preferable too. But being wrapped up in Jason like this? With the bone deep knowledge that he gets to *stay*? There's nothing quite like it.

"I'm not leaving," he whispers eventually, when Jason's settled down a bit. Better to put all the cards on the table from the get-go.

"No," Jason agrees quietly. "Ain't either."

Well, he kinda figured, but it's a different kind of nice to hear Jason say it.

"That's good, because I'm honestly beyond giving you a choice."

The fingertips slip down his hip and up again, then back to grab his thigh. "Dick," Jason whispers, pushing an inch away so they can look at each other. "I'm sorry for hurting you."

"I know." Dick smiles, because he means it, and because it's been too long since they've smiled together. "You're forgiven."

Closing his eyes, Jason leans into the touch.

"Can I kiss you?" He asks, voice breaking a little on the last word. "If you don't... I understand, Dickie. I'll take whatever you offer, we'll go

as slow as –“

“Quiet,” Dick sighs, pressing closer until they’re practically sharing the same breath. Just like it should be, like it’s always supposed to have been. Jason visibly relaxes against him, nosing at Dick’s jaw. “I would very much like a kiss. A hundred kisses more like, but that may be shooting for the moon right now.”

A twinkle of mirth finally appears in Jason’s eyes, and vague as it is, it fills the entire room. “Hm. No. I think we could do it.”

Dick snorts. “Yeah? Despite the concussions?”

The reaction is instant and predictable.

“Right.” Jason groans. “Oh, man, I’d forgotten about those. I fucking *hate* concussions.”

Instead of getting stuck on the ease settling between them, like one would slide on a trusty pair of old boots, Dick huffs a laugh.

“That’s putting it mildly. If I remember correctly you whined like a baby all six weeks, when you last recovered from one.”

“Pretty sure others would call it manly moaning.”

“Pretty sure you’re a big fat liar,” Dick laughs, a little giddy. A *lot* giddy. “Jason.”

“Love?”

The smile is face-splitting and good, and Dick says, “fucking kiss me,” and Jason doesn’t hesitate in pressing closed, dry lips to Dick’s.

It’s soft, warm. An aching familiarity left behind when Jason pulls a little away, only to push forward again with another kiss. His lips find the corner of Dick’s mouth, his cheek, then migrates to his eyelids, but Dick’s had enough of waiting, and with one hand still buried in thick hair, he pulls Jason back down to reclaim his mouth. Gently—as if it’s the first time all over again—Jason coaxes Dick open with the safety of no expectations and a warm mouth. When Dick moans, Jason finally pushes in.

“God,” he hisses against Dick’s mouth. “I’ve missed you. I’ve missed

you so *much*, baby –“ he interrupts himself by claiming Dick properly, apparently done talking for now.

It's hot and messy, a little sad but mostly full of joy, and despite the pain in his head and his throbbing arm Dick melts easily into the liquid heat traveling down his spine from every swipe of Jason's tongue against his own.

“I love you,” he gasps, catching Jason's bottom lip in a gentle nip of teeth. “I love you.” A suck earns him a satisfied growl. “I love you.”

With a look that tells Dick he's regretting every single life choice that ever brought him to this particular moment, Doctor Smith shuffles through the door after a quick peek around the room to assure himself, that Dick and Jason are the only crazy people present. Little does he know that between the two of them, they're more than enough to induce additional grey hair.

“*Remate?*” Jason mocks, mean as shit. “That's not even a fucking word!”

“Mate-again?” Dick tries but shakes his head immediately. “No, that sounds dumb. Zombie Mate? Ha.”

Doctor Smith sighs and initiates a step closer, only to abort the idea when Jason's scent sinks low and threatening, arm moving from Dick's waist to the nape of his neck. It settles heavy and possessive, thumb stroking across the line of his hair.

Their poor doctor clears his throat. “You told me it has been five years since you last upheld the bond, correct?”

“Yes,” Dick says, cutting off another snappy answer from Jason by catching a hold of his thigh. “But the bond's intact. Jason could smell me despite scent-blockers, and the emotional transparency between us has become more prominent, ever since I came back.”

It's true, Dick can feel Jason's simmering agitation at the lower part of his spine. Nothing more than an echo of what Jason's feeling probably, but it's exactly like it was five years earlier. It's an instinctual system, to keep your mate safe even when they're out of sight.

“Most likely because your emotional bond has been held alive by something,” Doctor Smith says, blissfully unaware of how right he is. Something? Yeah, try *half a decade of miserable pining*, “but nevertheless, for the bond to settle fully, you will have to consummate another mating upon your next heat and rut. Which brings me to the other thing.”

Jason tenses. “What other thing?”

To his credit, Doctor Smith almost doesn’t shrink at the biting tone. It’s too bad he’s around when Jason’s in this mood; usually he’s good at making people laugh, but for the past hour or so, he’s been acting like a starved dog gifted with a bone. He’d apologized profusely, when he sneered at Bruce for getting an inch too close earlier, face redder than a tomato, even as Bruce had waved it off. Dick had been quick to assure him it didn’t bother him in the slightest either, quite the opposite in fact. All it took for his family to scram was that one sentence and a single, dirty look at Jason.

So what, Dick’s a hot bone and he likes it.

“Normally we see an earlier and longer heat in situations such as these,” Doctor Smith says.

“However, due to the time apart, and the emotional duress you have been under, you must prepare for one of a rougher character that might not wait until your physical states are fully operational again. We will prescribe you suppressants to keep it at bay until the broken parts of you are healed at least, anything longer than that will damage your health. Now,” he smiles a tight, wry pull of lips, “I assume neither of you will need a briefing on how to handle each other during the oncoming heat?”

Apparently, Clark hasn’t gone back home yet. Dick kinda wishes he would.

“Are they gonna kill each other,” Jason hums beside him, drawing lazy circles on the inside of Dick’s wrist, “or fuck, you think?”

“As we can’t exactly run away, I sure hope Clark will just punch Bruce in the face and get it over with,” Dick whispers back, face scrunching

into a grimace of revolt, when he catches another whiff of Bruce's conflicted *should I fuck him or bail?* dilemma. "If I get even the slightest inclination of things going south, I'll scream, fair warning."

"Understandable." Jason tilts his head. "Why aren't they saying anything? They've been posturing for pretty long now."

"Ah, well, that'll be because B's an idiot who doesn't think he can be the Batman *and* a good alpha, and Clark's the other idiot who won't listen to Bruce's lamentations, 'cause he thinks it's a dumb reason, which they're *both* aware of. So, if they start talking about it, they might actually arrive at a solution and for some reason that's *Bad*."

"If Bruce is doing it out of concern, I think it's a good reason. Gotham's not a kind place, and the Batman isn't Bruce. Wouldn't want a cuddle session with the Dark Knight to be honest."

"I mean, yeah, it kind of is? Lord knows he's had worse ideas, but then again, he isn't listening to Clark either."

Jason looks at their silent... whatever they're doing, for a while longer.

"Boning seems to be the obvious solution here," he eventually declares.

Dick nods. "Definitely. It just so happens they share a single, operative braincell between them, and right now they're using it for a sexually laced tug of war."

Bruce hisses, whipping around. "We can *hear* you!"

"And we can *smell* you," Dick bitches back. "Get your horny, conflicted ass out of here before I call security or sustain lasting trauma."

Shockingly, instead of arguing, Bruce actually complies, albeit with a lot of scowling and brooding. He pushes unnecessarily close by Clark as he stalks out, leaving a cloud of hurt and angry alpha behind.

Sighing Dick thumps his head against Jason's shoulder. "Clark, would you mind opening the window? I'm sorry, but you stink."

Clark obeys quietly, all fight leaving him, as soon as Bruce isn't around anymore.

“This shit’s almost sadder than *our* attempt of a soap opera,” Jason says, voice low enough that Clark won’t hear them. His fingers intertwine with Dick’s, squeezing once.

It almost is yes, but Dick doesn’t know the entire story behind Bruce and Clark’s standstill and doesn’t understand why they won’t just end it. One way or another. No matter what, there will be heartbreak involved, and the sooner dealt with, the sooner they can move on.

Like I was so very good at moving on, Dick thinks humorlessly, following the sagging of Clark’s shoulders with sad eyes.

When he turns back around there’s a kind and almost believable smile on his stupid face, though. “I see you finally bullied someone into pushing your beds together.”

Dick accepts the deflect for what it is, smiling slyly. “Sicked my big bad alpha on them.”

And it had been *glorious*. All Jason had to do was look at poor doctor Smith and snarl a—somewhat polite—order of moving them together, before two nursers were roped into pushing Dick’s bed over. He didn’t even get to threatening them, which is mildly disappointing, but Dick’ll take what he can get.

Beside him Jason preens at the compliment.

“Doesn’t know I’m the sweet one,” he laughs, pressing a kiss against Dick’s temple.

Clark simply raises an eyebrow at the display. “I bet. You did always like playing damsel in distress, Richard.”

In answer Dick simply shrugs. Thanks to science and various international platforms, the world has come pretty far regarding prejudices surrounding people’s secondary genders, but the older generation still has difficulty letting go of old beliefs and routines. Now, as an omega, this could potentially piss Dick off, but he finds that to be a waste of time.

Instead he’s learned to embrace it. Nobody suspects an omega of kicking a face in or dealing millions of dollars of property damage. Also, Dick’s always been a slut for attention and *loves* the feeling of

eyes on him, especially during the illicit.

He nudges Clark's thigh with a foot. "Going home?"

"Yes. It's about time," Clark mutters, eyes flicking to the closed door for all of a second. "Barry and Lois are taking care of Metropolis but skulking further might just earn me a lecture. Couldn't go home before seeing you well, though."

A soft melancholy pulls somewhere behind Dick's ribs. "Thank you, Clark."

"Don't thank me. Listen," his face does something complicated for a moment. "If you want to—and *only* if—I wouldn't be opposed to meeting for dinner sometime. We could hit a diner somewhere halfway, or I could fly out here sometime. Just..." for a moment he seems lost for words. "I've missed you, kid."

Are you kidding? *If* he wants to?

Biting his lower lip against the dumb grin trying to eat his face Dick thumps his foot against Clark's thigh again.

"I would love to." A while ago, Clark was as much a father to him as Bruce is now, and although Clark may not live at the mansion anymore, Dick's never begun thinking of him as anything less. "But I do have one itty-bitty condition."

Clark nods, maybe a bit desperate. "Whatever you want."

"Sometime I'm gonna bring Jay," Dick says, answering Jason's surprised look with a smile. "He'll need an introduction to the whole family, after all. Even the ones far away from Gotham."

Face softening to something vulnerable Clark reaches out a warm hand to run it down Dick's cheek. "Deal."

Jason eventually asks him, which doesn't surprise Dick but he kinda hoped... well. He doesn't know what he hoped. It's a conversation they need to have.

“Tell me what you did in Metropolis?”

“... you sure? It’s not only gloom and burning your shit, but I wasn’t exactly happy, Jay.”

“I’m sure.”

“Okay.”

“Okay.”

“I don’t know where to start.”

“Wherever you want.”

“What a great help you are.”

“Dick.”

“Ugh. Fine.”

So he tells Jason of ceremonially burning one of his favorite sweaters in a garbage can, fire lit from a burrowed lighter that a kind homeless man—who’d been intriguingly invested in the entire thing—had burrowed him. That gets him laugh.

The ones about the insomnia, the refusal to dance, and how he most days forgot about eating don’t. There were good days in-between the misery, of course there were. Sometimes even weeks and months where the sun shone and the rain was gentle, so Dick makes sure to tell Jason about those too.

And because Dick had to, he makes Jason talk about himself as well.

There are not as many good moments in his story, even if Jason tries to make it sound like that’s the case. When Dick frowns a bit too hard at the mention of alcohol in quantities that worries him too much not to react, Jason grows serious. Roy helped him, he says. Finally got enough of his wallowing and self-pitying and knocked some sense into his head.

They both end up crying again, but in the good way.

Besides, catharsis has never been promised kind, only necessary.

Leaving the hospital happens hand in hand. Bruce behind them with each of their bags slung over his shoulders and Tim ahead, bickering with Damian as they lead Dick and Jason to the car waiting to bring them home.

There's a flush of color high on Jason's cheekbones that looks less like a reaction to the cold October morning and more like emotions too big to put into words. He's staring at Tim and Damian ahead but doesn't say or ask Dick of anything. The look fits him well, Dick thinks. Especially with that secret, happy smile of his.

"Ready to go home, boys?"

When Bruce finally catches up with them, he claps a hand on Jason's shoulder. "Remember you're welcome to stay at the manor whenever you want."

Jason swallows but manages to murmur a polite "yes'sir," and it's Dick's turn to hide a smile.

The hand stays on Jason's shoulder right until Bruce slips into the driver's seat.

Chapter End Notes

me: *throws grenade at the idiots to get them moving* problem solved

also me: how are they gonna survive it though?

me: o:

-- Idek what the capsule looks like, but the vague image in my head says "fat cucumber" (: ANYWAY, next chapter is the last, and there will be A/B/O smut, so fair warning! I'll update the tags, and it's not the entire chapter, so I'll make a guide of where to stop and start if you wanna skip it <3

we'll make headlines baby

Chapter Notes

PLEASE guys, heed the new tags!!

as promised a guide to avoid the smut which I'm only slightly embarrassed to say does in fact take up the bigger part of this chapter--also !warning! for some filthy language before the smut begins

from Jason says, "it's a theory."

to:

they don't talk for a good long while

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They don't forget what dear doctor Smith said about the stressed heats, but it does get buried a little under time.

Which isn't *their* fault! Broken bones take a long time to heal, and the concussions demand them on the couch doing fuck-all for the larger part of the healing process. By the time Jason's ribs are deemed fine again along with both of their heads, Dick's arm condemns him to at least another three weeks, and so the suppressants stay.

"Stop whining, Dickie, I'm literally massaging your feet, it could be a lot worse," Jason sighs one evening, after another long spiel from Dick about the cold and cruel injustice of the world.

"But I wanna *fuck* you, alpha! Preferably until I'm a crying, drooling mess ."

Jason's hands still as his gaze cuts to Dick's sullen pouting.

"Oh yeah?"

When he resumes the work of pampering Dick's feet, his fingers bite into the skin with a delicious edge of something on the verge of breaking.

Bingo, Dick thinks, killing a smug grin before it sees the light of day.

“Definitely,” he laments, stretching a bit on the couch, until his shirt rides up just enough for a sliver of skin to peek out. Jason’s eyes are predictably drawn to it. Like a horny moth to a flame. “It’s been so long, baby.”

“Mhm. Want me to make you cry?” Jason’s hands slide up Dick’s ankles, hooking beneath his knees, and yanks him closer. In the blink of an eye Dick’s flat on his back with his legs wrapped around Jason’s waist. He’s looming, and good gracious it’s been too long since Jason Todd’s been there to loom in Dick’s life.

“I’m not opposed, you know,” Jason murmurs, eyes going a little dark as they slide down Dick’s body. “Been making you cry for all the wrong reasons lately. I should make it up to you by having you wail on my knot.”

“Yes,” Dick breathes. “That sounds like a tremendously good idea.”

“Bet. Now, omega,” and fuck *off* his voice hasn’t been this low and alpha demanding for a while, Dick’s gonna cream his pants, “remember what the doctor said?”

Ugh. He knows where this is going and what Jason wants to hear, but if Dick says it, all the fun’s gonna stop. “Sorry, I recently hit my head real hard, and the memory part is a wee bit wonky.”

Jason snorts, rolling his eyes. “Really?”

“Oh yeah—*Jason!*”

“Mh?” The bastard peeks up at him from under thick lashes, green eyes swimming with devious delight as he soothes his tongue over the bite on Dick’s thigh. “What? Thought this was what you wanted.”

“No!” He doesn’t care how his voice goes high-pitched and whiny, not at all. Fire’s licking up his spine, pooling into molten heat in his stomach. “I want your big fat cock in me.”

“Slutty,” Jason coos.

“News at fucking eleven, you love it you mean asshole.”

“Obviously. Sweetheart...”

“No,” Dick whines, closing his eyes against the world. He doesn’t wanna hear this, *knows* that tone of voice. “You’re telling me no.”

“I am. What did the doc say?”

Again with the low alpha rumble, it’s just not fair.

“Something about the importance of taking care of ourselves, and how physical activity of the horny kind might trigger a heat despite the suppressants,” Dick grumbles, but peers out at Jason who’s sat back up. Strong hands wrap around his back and the good arm, pulling him until he’s well and truly in his alpha’s lap. Dick thumps his head against a broad shoulder.

“Don’t like it.”

“Me neither, but we’re gonna hurt each other if we don’t listen,” Jason soothes, running a hand up and down Dick’s spine. “And it’s about time to take the pills.”

It does help with the fire after Dick drowns two heat suppressants and Jason cooks for him. Afterwards he’s sitting across Jason’s broad back, kneading out muscles and kinks in his shoulders with one hand, while only feeling moderately in the mood for something filthier.

Truth be told, it’s even better to make contact with Jason like this than sex right now, not that he’ll admit it out loud. Sure, Dick is looking forward to the frenzied fucking and general sinning they’ll commit the second the cast is off, but this? Having the love of his life melt into pudding beneath him, pushing out contented sounds with every drive of his hands? Even better.

They’re not lost to instincts or the heat of the moment. Jason’s babbling about the new movie rendition of an Austen novel, telling Dick exactly what he would’ve done better, had he been the one with a camera in his hands.

“I love you,” Dick tells him in bed later, fingertips running across day-old stubble. His heart is begging to be pulled out and put somewhere closer to Jason’s. It’s all-consuming, this adoration.

Jason’s rumbling in contentment under him, arm heavy and safe across Dick’s waist. “I love you too. More than anything.”

The curtains aren't drawn, and for once the moon's out and shining in Gotham, a silver beam having found its way onto Jason's face. It's the closest to ethereal Dick has ever come.

"You're a very beautiful, horny moth."

The rumbling stops and Jason opens his eyes. "Should I ask?"

"I'm a sexy flame," Dick whispers.

"Damn right you are."

"Dick."

"*Jason.*"

"... omega, honestly –"

"No!"

He's been nesting ever since he was fifteen and presented the first time, so Dick should fucking know the signs. The cast is off and so are the suppressants. There's been so much kissing that his lips are constantly a little numb, and Jason's cooked like he's preparing for the literal apocalypse.

And that's not even the worst part: Dick has lumbered around Jason's apartment like a feral gremlin, stealing shit from absolutely everywhere and snapping at Jason every time he gets too close to the bedroom.

But he doesn't clock why.

"It's not *done* yet," he hisses and slams the door, wondering why he's in such a mood. All that's certain is Dick's nest will be the best damned snuggle pile ever to be snuggled in (and fucked in, mind you) and his alpha's being obtusely dumb.

He's just resituated a pillow for the millionth time, is in the middle of

considering where to put Jason's right sock—maybe under his hoodie? Dick thinks that would smell fucking superb—when there's a knock on the door.

"Dickie. Let me in." There's a distinct note of amused exasperation to Jason's voice, but Dick's in no mind to find it anything but annoying. The nest isn't good enough, Jason won't like it; so why the fuck is he pressing the issue?

"How many times do I have to say it, alpha?" Dick snarls. "It's not *done* yet!"

A long pause of silence. Then, when Jason speaks again, he doesn't sound amused either.

"There are no more pillows left for you to steal, and you reek of distress."

Jokes on him, the couch is still in possession of all its parts and Dick's set his eyes on them. So what if his body is aching to have his alpha inside him? So what if he feels like crumbling down any minute for reasons unspecified? He'll just have to deal until he can look at the nest and not feel like garbage.

Dick glares at the arrangement of pillows, clothes, and soft knick-knacks. For some reason, no matter what he does, the space doesn't feel quite *right*. Like it's somehow lacking.

"Not done," Dick grumbles again, an unknown discomfort boiling in his gut. When Jason doesn't immediately answer, Dick tiptoes to the door. It's quiet outside, and although he didn't hear Jason leave, it doesn't mean he's not gone. Which isn't actually that nice a thought despite Dick's earlier demands of silence.

He frowns at the door, fingertips running along the handle. What if... what if Jason's gone? Maybe alpha left. Again.

Dick throws a disgusted look back at his nest. It's not good enough, too messy, and not soft enough, of course his alpha doesn't want to fuck him there. Dick's been stupid to think otherwise and now he's gone, maybe to the kitchen to give him some extra time, or maybe out the door, into the streets, disappearing in another five-year fog of despair and solitude –

A sharp twist of pain rips through him, and his hand tightens around the handle of the door, panic seizing his ability to breathe.

He's got to catch his alpha, has to stop him and promise he'll make a better nest, that *he* will be better –

“Omega.”

The order is absolute. Alpha demanding and rocking in its intensity. Dick's spine shoots ramrod stiff in obedience, and the entirety of his focus settles on the overwhelming presence seeping through wood and stone.

“Let me in. Right now.”

Below the demonstration of authority there's a certain strain to Jason's voice, and Dick's hands tremble a little as he hurries to twist the key. It's only just clicked open before Jason's pushing his way inside, a mountain of skin and muscle and soothing pheromones.

“Dammit,” he mumbles, kicking the door shut as he gathers Dick in his arms.

Dick who's whining and maybe crying a little, running hands up and down his alpha's strong back to press him closer.

So he can't run away.

His body is torn between utter despair and burning arousal, slick soaking his leggings in equal measures to the tears and snot on his face, and none of it makes much sense. The feeling of doom slithering into his ears, down his spine and around his heart has no fountain, no beginning and no end it seems, but *oh*, how real it is anyway.

He's babbling, although it takes a few seconds to understand what he's saying, because Jason is everywhere. He hoists Dick up like he weighs nothing, one arm around his waist, the other under his ass. Dick wraps his legs around him in a grip perhaps a little too close to uncomfortable but can't summon the power to relax.

He can't go, not again. Dick will be better, he *will*.

“Sorry, ‘m sorry,” he hears himself snivel, rubbing against Jason's scent gland. Dick wants to bite, wants to reclaim, but the urge calms

when Jason reciprocates the gesture of scenting. “Nest’s almost done, just need a few mo-more things and it’ll be so good, alpha, promise.”

Jason leans against the door, holding Dick tighter. It’s weird. They smell exactly alike: Jason also torn somewhere between sex and doomsday. Maybe he’s even more upset with Dick’s sorry excuse of a nest than Dick initially thought. The thought has Dick push a little away, delirious with the need to *fix*, to make alpha *stay*.

“Down. Let me down, I’ll find something –“

“Baby,” Jason whispers, voice hoarse and arms unbudging. “I’m not leaving.”

Dick goes still, breath caught somewhere half-way out.

“Thought this might happen,” Jason continues quietly, burying his face in Dick’s neck. “Should’ve talked to you about it earlier, *fuck*.” The curse is uttered with such conviction Dick can taste it in the air. The arm around his waist squeezes. “Omega, I need you to do something for me.”

Yet another order that seeps into the desperation ripping at Dick and catching a hold of the anguish, bringing him closer to reality. He nods stiffly, once, and Jason rumbles with satisfaction, muttering a deep and gritty *good boy* that has arousal chase some of the fear away.

“First of all, you’re gonna take five big breaths with me, ‘kay?”

Dick nods again, already conforming his breathing pattern to Jason’s.

“Thank you baby,” Jason rumbles, then falls quiet so Dick can continue breathing along with him. It takes a few tries before they match, but when Dick finally fills his lungs with air measured and deep, it sticks.

Jason has always breathed steadily, so unlike Dick’s hurried excitement. It’s not the first time they do this, but it’s been so long, that the ease which settles through the practice knocks him a little delirious.

Breath number five flows into the space around them and Jason shifts.

“Good,” he repeats. “I have a theory. Wanna hear?”

“Mh,” Dick mumbles, but doesn’t look up from his spot in Jason’s neck.

“We’ve talked, right? About what happened, why I... I left. And we’ve been very good at it, at understanding each other.”

It's not a question, not really, and although Dick doesn't want to talk about the time they weren't together, he nods.

“So, *rationally* we’re good. Emotionally on the way,” Jason huffs, just a tad amused but mostly sad. “Thing is though, our instincts haven’t gotten the message yet. Don’t think so at least. My alpha is screaming at me to roll over, stomach up, to beg forgiveness of you, ‘cause that’s how he understands it.”

Dick frowns. “Don’t want you to,” he mutters a little more coherent. “Not as your boyfriend and not as your omega either.”

“Okay,” Jason says softly. “But Dick. They don’t really *talk*. They *do*.”

“So, what you’re saying is that rationally, I know why you left,” Dick whispers, pressing a small kiss to Jason’s overheated skin, because his scent dives at those words, “but my omega, who certainly isn’t very rational, doesn’t.”

Jason nods. “It’s a theory.”

Comfortable, heated arousal has mostly chased away the fear now, only a calm brush of melancholy left.

“I thought I was terrible at making nests, alpha,” Dick whispers, allowing himself to sink back into the sweltering heat again.

If words get them nowhere why waste time on them now? Dick would much rather have Jason sing praises of his nest, before fucking him open on his knot till neither of them can walk. Maybe he’ll ask nicely. Jury’s still out though.

Jason tenses.

“*Your* nest?” His voice slithers into the deeper registers, scent taking a radical dive into filthy demand. “Never.” He sounds almost flabbergasted by the mere idea. “You make the best nests baby, missed

them so much. Can I see?"

Dick smiles against Jason's skin, hips grinding his aching cunt into the hard planes of Jason's stomach. Had he been a better man, he'd been embarrassed at how quickly he's pushed back into arousal. He's not though.

"Sure," he hums, like it's no big deal. The play has taken a hold on him, and if Dick is bratty on a good day just you wait 'till the omega part takes the wheel. He's been known to drive Jason mad on occasion.

Jason huffs a laugh, and three big steps later Dick is unceremoniously dropped into the curated mess of pillows, duvets, and clothes, he's spent all day putting together.

"Come on alpha," Dick whines, when Jason remains standing, eyes sliding up and down Dick's body with a gaze heavy enough it feels like hands. Stretching, Dick spreads his legs in blatant invitation.

Jason groans, reaching down to adjust himself as a heavy wave of alpha pheromones mix with the sweeter notes of omega ecstasy. It's not quite gone into rut territory yet, but Dick can smell it on the horizon.

"Beautiful," Jason mutters, his attention still on Dick.

"You're supposed to worship my nest," he points out, pouting. "I know *I* am beautiful."

A wicked grin spreads across Jason's face, and he releases his cock, fingers catching the edge of his shirt instead.

"Yeah? Looks so soft omega. Bet I can fuck you real hard in it."

"Prove it." Dick flashes a dangerous smile along with the blatant bait.

"I could," Jason hums, edging a step closer to prop a knee on the edge of the bed. His hand slips up under his shirt, and Dick *sees* how it runs across his pecs, which isn't fair. Groping Jason is his job. "Smells so good too. Did you come all over it already, baby?"

That makes Dick snicker, fingers hooking in his sweatpants. Jason's eyes cling as he slides them down and out of the way, leaving him in

nothing but his birthday suit from the hips down.

“Why don’t you come find out?” Dick whispers, spreading his legs obscenely wide again.

That finally does it.

Between one move and the next Jason manages to rip his shirt off *and* bury himself face-first in Dick’s wet pussy. His tongue swipes one, broad lick across Dick’s aching clit before diving down and *in*. Big hands wrap around a thigh each, pushing Dick’s legs up towards his chest as Jason lets out an almost sub-sonic growl of satisfaction.

“Fucking hell –“ he chokes on the curse and Dick’s slick, breath hot and humid on his cunt. “So good, ‘mega. You taste so fucking *good* –“

Dick keens, high and needy as Jason’s tongue pushes in, arching his back. There is no preamble, nothing to prepare Dick for having his alpha so close, so deep inside. He grinds his hips down, uncaring that he’s practically humping Jason’s face.

His alpha loves it too, Dick knows he does; most other lovers Dick has taken to bed over the years might eventually have gotten scared of the ferocity and abandon with which he fucks, but Jason has always hungered for it. Begged to have it, even.

“Please,“ Dick whines, grabbing a fistful of thick hair to push Jason closer. “Alpha, *fuck*, right there –“

Jason—ever the gentleman—absolutely devours him; tongue alternating between wet kisses on his clit, and rough swipes dipping deep inside on every other turn. Dick throws his head back, mouth hanging open on gasping orders of *more, alpha give me more*.

“Gonna come for me, omega?” Jason coos against his throbbing pussy. “Know you want to, just look at yourself. So fucking desperate. Come on baby.”

Opening his mouth Jason catches Dick’s clit between his teeth, putting in the barest pressure, and Dick’s lost.

The orgasm rips from him, racing up his back from the tips of his toes. It takes the world away for a moment as slick rushes out and into Jason’s hungry mouth. He’s only vaguely aware of the *thank you’s*

falling from his lips in a pathetic stream of mindless lust.

It burns through him quickly though, and when his vision returns to him, so does the need.

“Again,” he begs, breathless, tightening his hold on Jason’s hair so he can grind shamelessly against his face.

“Not satisfied yet?” There’s a delicious edge to his alpha’s voice. One that’ll give Dick all the depraved things he shouldn’t have. “You’re insatiable, Dickie. Just came all over my face, and here you are, willing to beg for more.”

“Ye—yes,” Dick whispers. “Want more please, give me *more* –“

Jason rumbles a laugh, and suddenly Dick doesn’t have a hold of his hair anymore. Before he can whine about it however, lips crash into his own and the sweet, salty taste of his own wanton explodes in his mouth. He laughs, delirious, and opens up so Jason can practically fuck his mouth.

Jason sucks on his tongue, humming with content when Dick catches his bottom lip between his teeth.

“So filthy,” Dick sighs when he’s allowed a moments reprieve. “Missed you.”

Jason groans, deep and satisfied. “Right back at ya’ baby.”

Then he rolls his hips down into Dick’s in a long, sinuous movement, that has Dick’s eyes roll back in his head. Jason’s cock is harder than steel against him, and the scent of rut is stronger than before. The hands on Dick’s thighs grip tighter too, but clearly, Jason’s still not quite *there*.

Dick knows that his alpha struggles to trust himself during a rut, so worried of not taking care, that he can’t let go on his own. It must be especially hard for him now, despite the brave front he’s donned.

But Dick’s been here before, knows what Jason needs, and he refuses to be the only one allowed to relax and just *be* tonight. Jason probably needs it even more than he does. Which means Dick’ll have to push the buttons.

“Jay,” he mumbles against tongue, teeth, and lips. Relaxing is easy right now, the heavy weight of Jason on top of him a different kind of high. He’s been skittering on the edge of heat-addled, not quite ready to dip in, but now he closes his eyes and dives. Instincts light up as rational thought evaporates, and he feels Jason stiffen above him. Most likely he’s smelled the change.

“I’m so empty.”

Jason moans, grinding down again. “I’ll fill you up, Dickie. Stretch you out, promise.”

Dick chases Jason when he pulls back again, legs winding around his waist.

“Want you to *knot* me alpha,” he hisses, arms winding around Jason’s shoulders and commits to a filthy grind against his abs in chase of another release. Slick smear across golden skin. “Want you to fuck me with your big fat cock and come all over me.”

There’s a hitch to Jason’s breathing as his scent explodes, and Dick reaches down to wrap a possessive hand around his cock. It’s even thicker than he remembers. Soft steel is silky hot in his grip, and he gives it a few tugs. “Want you to push so many loads into my cunt it’ll be dripping out of—*hah!*”

Before he knows it Dick is flipped around, and his shirt ripped off. Without thinking, his upper body dips down as he pushes his ass up, giggling with delight when Jason pushes his thighs into an obscene stretch. He’s forgotten how good it feels presenting.

“Yes –“ the rest of Dick’s victorious exclamation is drowned on a broken moan when Jason pushes in with absolutely no preamble and no hesitation. His thick cock sheaths itself into Dick’s cunt in one thrust, and then there are hands on his hips, pulling him back, pulling him closer.

It’s *deliriously* good. Heavy, filling Dick to the fucking brink in a burning stretch that feels oh so familiar.

“Good omega,” Jason gasps, pulls out, and fucks back into him, hard enough that Dick would’ve scooted away was he not being held firmly in place. “So fucking *tight*, so hot,” Jason groans, forehead pressing between Dick’s shoulder blades, “what a greedy little pussy, gripping

me so good.”

Oh, yeah Jason’s gone.

There’s a dangerous rumble to his words, something deep and primal. Dick’s hips are released as Jason drapes himself over him, hands coming to grope at his chest instead. The pace is vicious, hard and sopping wet, Jason’s big cock sliding in and out again and again—Dick’s having trouble hearing his own incoherent babbling over the loud smacks echoing between them, but he’s pretty sure he’s officially been reduced to begging. Jason drives into him with merciless abandon, tearing him apart at the seams and putting him together again.

“Yesyesyesyes –“ Dick pushes his chest into Jason’s hands, cunt squeezing his cock. *“Love your big fucking cock alpha, please do- don’t stop, never stop –“*

“Yeah, fuck.” Jason sounds a little broken, palming Dick’s chest. “Baby I’ll keep you here forever—you’re mine, hm? All *mine* –“

Dick’s eyes roll back into his head at the promise, and a moment later Jason changes the angle the tiniest bit, so instead of hitting just short of Dick’s sweet spot he’s hammering it spot on. Every. Damn. Time.

Each drag of his fat cock rips Dick apart, stretching his cunt like no one else has ever been able to.

“Please! Fuck.” Tears start to prick at his eyes.

Jason snarls, hips momentarily pausing to grind low and dirty –

“Presenting so prettily for me.”

Dick would like to answer, he would, but his throat is clogging up and he’s honestly just hanging on for the ride by now. There’s drool dripping down his chin, and his eyes are dangerously close to the back of his head.

Soon he’s bounced mercilessly back and forth again, in no way contributing to moving. Not that Jason seems terribly inconvenienced by this; in fact, when Dick slackens and the only thing holding him up is Jason, his alpha rumbles such a low sound Dick can feel it travelling though him.

He whines in response. “*Alpha!*”

“Can’t say anything else, can you? Am I the only thing left on your pretty mind, baby?” Jason’s hands find a nipple each, pinching and pulling. The sharp bite singes down Dick’s spine, cunt gripping tight around the thick cock pumping him open to take a knot even bigger.

“Hn,” Dick gasps, blinking his eyes open. “Wan’it.”

“Tell me,” Jason leans in, latching on to Dick’s neck, teeth tantalizingly close to the fated mating bite. “Anything, I’ll give you fucking anything.”

Dick whines, mind going blank for a moment, and when he comes to his body has found the energy to fuck back onto Jason’s thrust.

“Bite... *hn*, bite me alpha, wanna be yours.”

Jason curses, hands abandoning Dick’s chest to wrap around his waist and pull. In a matter of seconds Dick’s in Jason’s lap, legs spread across strong thighs. One of his alpha’s arms stays winded around his waist to keep him still, while the other travels up his body, until a hand wraps around his throat. There’s no pressure to it, only the overpowering knowledge that Jason holds all that Dick is.

And won’t ever let go again.

“Oh, baby,” Jason whispers, hips snapping up into him, big hand coming down to finally rub at his clit. Dick thinks he screams, head lolling back to rest on Jason’s shoulders. “You’re crying.”

He is, has been for some time now. His eyes are probably crossed as well. All in all, Dick’s feeling pretty fucking nice right now. The new pace Jason has set is too slow for his liking, the pump of his hips lazy and filling Dick to the brim, but nowhere near enough for the fire burning.

“Told ya I would make you cry for better reasons.” The hand on Dick’s throat migrates to his hair, tugging sharply. His face is turned, lips claimed in a messy kiss.

“Want me to mark you?”

Does he even have to ask?

Dick tries to raise onto his knees, to fuck himself on Jason's cock where a knot is just about to form, gripping and letting go again on every thrust, but his alpha denies him the wheel. His clit is abandoned, and the arm around his waist tightens.

Jason bites his lower lip on the way back, dipping back in to soothe the sting. "Answer me, omega."

"Ye-yes," Dick sobs, kissing at Jason's neck when he's released, licking and nipping at his gland with shameless desperation. "Mark me alpha, want you to bite me, fuck me, *breed me* –"

"Fucking shit," Jason hisses, finally upping the pace of his hips. They snap up and Dick sobs, spreading himself even further. "Yeah, I'll fucking breed you, omega, *fuck*. Fill you until you're all round and big. I'll take so good care of you, of our pup –"

He's on birth control, they both know, but Dick cries for it anyway, eyes crossing as the heat in him gathers. It starts in his toes and the tips of his fingers. The closer it gets to his core, the stronger it becomes.

Jason's knot finally catches and Dick sobs with relief, even more so when Jason's teeth find the mating spot on his neck; too high to hide away. As the knot expands even more and ties them together, Jason's thrust becomes sharper, more grinding, and the heat turns snappish. The knot stretches Dick wide, bringing him closer to insanity than he's ever been before.

Dick thinks he might be begging, but he can't quite hear it. All he knows is Jason in him and around him, the smell of alpha rut and omega heat mixing readily to hit the peak.

"*Mine* –" Jason chokes, *fucking up*. The world stands still for an eternal second.

"Yours," Dick gasps. "*Mine*."

And then his orgasm hits him just as Jason bites down properly.

The pain is short-lived but delicious. Dick's cunt tightens with the ecstasy overtaking him, and then he's coming. Slick pours out of him, and he grabs at Jason to keep him still, keep him tethered to the spot

on Dick's neck where the mating bond slowly settles. Dick rides Jason's fat knot, moaning and whining until he's coming again, tears and drool sliding down his face and his neck.

When the last wave of mind-numbing pleasure starts ebbing, Jason releases him.

Dick's boneless as they fall to the side, Jason fucking into him with erratic, little motions in chase of his own release. It's limited because of the knot, but if anything, it only seems to spur Jason on.

"Shit, baby, fuck *yeah*, fuckfuckfuck—look at you fucking squirting all over us, felt so good around my knot. My big fat knot, taking it so good –"

It takes a moment for Dick to become aware enough to turn his face. Because of the knot, the angle is a little awkward, but Jason lets him. The sight of his alpha is a punch to the gut.

"S'pretty, alpha," Dick slurs.

Green eyes—hazy with heat—settles on him, ripped from where they've been pinned on Jason's cock disappearing in Dick further down. He blinks and Dick realizes his alpha is crying too. Dick reaches up, his turn to grab a fistful of hair and bare Jason's neck.

"Yes," Jason whines, low and pitiful, hands tightening on Dick's hips as he fucks in even harder. The blunt edges of cozy arousal teases with the promise of another release, but Dick shoves it away in favor of leaning in to close gentle teeth around Jason's nape.

"Please."

His eyes roll into the back of his head at the sound of his alpha begging.

"Dickie, *please*, bite me, baby –"

Dick bites down and Jason comes with a long, deep moan.

The taste of blood, salt, and arousal melt together on his tongue as Jason's seed fills him to the brim. His hips grind into Dick, the hot, wet feeling of his release pulling that soft orgasm from him after all.

When Dick deems the mark on Jason's neck deep and visible enough, he lets go, but doesn't move far. Straightening his neck back into a comfortable position, Dick makes sure to murmur quiet words of encouragement until the last, erratic spasms roll out of Jason's body.

"So good for me Jay, such a good alpha. Fill'd me to the brim," he stumbles over the praise, brain a mush, but judging by the way Jason wraps around him, he's coherent enough to be understood.

They don't talk for a good long while. Not about the mating bites slowly syncing up, or how good it feels to be locked together like this again. Not about the quiet *finally* that settles into the marrow of their bones, or anything else at all. It's all said anyway; in the way Dick can feel Jason breathing against him, their hearts' rhythms finding each other. The heat of Jason's skin against his feels like heaven, slightly slick with rapidly cooling sweat. Jason's thumbs draw circles on Dick's hips in repeated, calming patterns.

Eventually Dick grabs the hand under his head, pressing a lazy kiss to the palm.

"Hi," he whispers, and Jason huffs.

"Hey, baby. Good?"

It's probably pretty clear from the dopey smile Dick's got pressed against Jason's skin and the satisfied scent he's emitting in fumes, but he understands why his alpha asks. A shared heat and rut is a messy thing, a little rough. Between the two of them even more so than normal, because of who they are, what they like. Dick doesn't need to be stretched, doesn't want the foreplay when he's caught in the heat. It's different in the carefully curated and filthy sex they engage in outside their cycles, sure, but not this.

Still; it's a fragile situation, they've been apart for quite some time.

"Very," he sighs. "You?"

"Adequate," Jason says after a moment, voice clear with amusement at the poor joke, and Dick snorts.

"The cock in me doesn't say *adequate*."

"Hm, the cock in you is far from satisfied."

“Clearly. Greedy motherfucker,” Dick pushes his hips back, laughing through a gasp at the answering grunt leaving Jason. Already his pussy is humming with need, but it’s slow. Closer to excited than being ready yet.

He pulls out of Jason’s hand and smiles softly. “I love you.”

Jason reaches up to trace a finger along Dick’s jaw, smile visible in his voice. “I adore you,” he whispers. “I love you. I breathe you. Without you, I’m only half a soul.”

Dick leans back. “You wonderful man.”

Sighing Jason pulls him closer, into the heat of him; back home in each other.

‘Latest in; business tycoon wrapped around former Wayne heir on sexy night out! What does it mean?’

‘Dick Grayson Wayne confirms; I am dating Jason Todd.’

‘Gotham’s favorite heartthrobs have found each other; massive response from fans!’

“Dick for fuck’s sake,” Bruce groans, hurtling the paper across the living room. “Could you please warn me before showing up naked on the front pages?”

“Excuse you, I’m wearing pants.”

“*Only* pants. And Jason.”

Dick sniggers at the heavy hand on his thigh, turning to share an amused look with green eyes. Jason waggles his brows.

“And Jason,” Dick agrees.

Chapter End Notes

it's doooooone -- honestly this has been a joy, you guys are so nice and wonderful, THANK YOU for the kudos and the beautiful freaking comments, it's made me cry (:

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!